

SANTA-MARIA;
OR,
THE MYSTERIOUS PREGNANCY.
A ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By I. FOX.

**I have't—it is engender'd.—Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.**

SHAKSPEARE.

VOL. II.

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SANTA-MARIA:

THE MEXICAN ROMANCE.
SANTA-MARIA.
A ROMANCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

CHAPTER I.

By J. M. B. B.



Like an old friend, I have
Muttered to me, and now
I have, and night
Must bring me home to the
HARVARD.

THE Count and Countess had scarce
time to form their observations on the
affecting story related by Bianca, when
a violent tapping assailed the cottage
door. Thimble immediately attended
Trinity's key.

SANTA-MARIA.

CHAPTER I.

Like an *old tale* still, which shall have
Matters to rehearse, tho' credit be asleep, and not
An ear open.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Count and Countess had scarce
time to form their observations on the
affecting story related by Bianca, when
a violent rapping assaulted the cottage
door. Thommaso immediately attended

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this

this unexpected summons, and demanded “ Who was without ? ” — “ It’s me — hic — Thom — ma — hic — it’s me. ” — Then straight went the intruder’s head full up against the door. Rodolph and Isabella immediately rose, and Carlo as instantly recollecting the voice without, anxiously exclaimed — “ It is my uncle, Drosi. ” — “ Y-e-s — hic — hic — up — yes — it’s Drosi, ” was the disjointed reply. — The door thereupon was unfastened, and in came Drosi, staggering, quite overcome with the charms of his favourite mistress — lachryma-christi. “ How now (said the Count, sternly) — why, this intrusion ? — You are drunk, firrah. ” — “ Be si-lent, my Lord — be si-lent — I — I — hic — I — know — I — am — But if I — have not had — hic — O Je-su — hicc-up — reason-enough — to ma-ma — make me so-ber — The devil — take

---take me---that's all---ex-cuse me---
 fwearing--my--my Lord—But—I--I--know
 ---I am---dru--dru--drunk.”

“ Then more shame for you, be it
 spoken uncle,” observed Carlo.

“ Hold your—your prate, thou scurvy
 knave (returned Drofi, placing his hand
 on the hilt of his sword) or I will car--
 ba--na- do—hic—you well—for though---
 I may be—dru--drunk—I can fig--fight
 as well---as the best—aye—dolt—as--as--
 well as my Lord there.—And by Jesu--
 that--that--is--faying--a good deal.”

At this last expression, Drofi staggered
 against the wall, opposite to the one
 which supported Rinaldo's picture. His
 eyes were instantly fixed thereon—he
 stared wildly, and for some moments
 stopt the incoherency of his speech.—
 His voice, however, soon found re-utte-

rance, and his senses some recovery at the sight of the young prince. The Count and the whole cottage, were surprised and perplexed at this strange conduct, whilst their anxieties predicted some fresh mystery at hand. Drosi, however, after as much reflection, as he could summons to his assistance, propped his tottering carcase against the wall, and with a recovering degree of sobriety, exclaimed—"There he is—by St. Marco—there he is, sure as my name is honest, sober, Signior Drosi."

"Who? (most fiercely returned the Count) Who, firrah?"

"Who?—Why, my Lord, have you lost your sight?"

"Scoundrel, you have lost your senses—answer me straight—quick (roared the Count, drawing his sword, and fixing

ing its point to Drossi's breast) answer, I say! and inform me what brought you hither in this intoxicated state, and what sudden cause thus banished you so unexpectedly from the inn?"

Isabella, Carlo, Sylvia, and the hospitable cottagers, perceiving the violent emotions of Rodolph, and the consequent danger of drunken Drossi, unanimously rushed between, and interfered in his present behalf.—The old soldier having recovered himself a little, however, by this time, and touched by the application made by all around, for his protection—with great good-humour, and some composure, exclaimed—"Have done, have done, my Lord is too generous to take an advantage of his ancient veteran, and faithful follower."—

Rodolph, softened by this condescen-

sion, and convinced of the integrity
 that attended the profession, ordered
 Carlo to bring his uncle some water;
 which having drank plentifully of, he
 afterwards, unwittingly, seated himself
 in his Lady's chair.—The count, on this,
 beckoned Isabella and the rest, to seat
 themselves as well as they conveniently
 could, and then, with unaccustomed affa-
 bility beseeched Drosi to explain the
 cause of his thus suddenly breaking in
 upon them: ——— Here, the honest
 fellow perceiving that Rodolph was in
 an armed chair, conceived himself to be
 in one also, and, in attempting to imitate
 his master, whose elbows were placed on
 the arms, in a state of his usual gravity,
 he fell sideways on the floor, from which
 prostrate situation he was relieved by
 his nephew and Thommaso.—Being now

once more re-inflated in his chair, he, with much consequence, thus commenced his story:—

“ My good Lord, and my good Lady,

“ After our comrades under my immediate inspection, had dressed the sheep, which that honest young fellow there had provided us with, ready cut and dried, we all sat cheerfully down to supper—On setting out, however, you must understand, my Lord, that we had not forgot the wine—of that we drank pretty freely.—Together, therefore, with good eating and good drinking, after our long journey, we all got tolerably merry.—

When lo! my good Lord, and my good Lady, a troop of armed men—about 50, 100, or 500, I can't exactly tell which—entered the apartment where we were all carousing—we all turned round on

our heels, or rather all reeled round on our heels—I like to be fair and open, my Lord—I therefore say, reeled—because I am apt to think that we were all drunk—I, however, being the sobberest of any, demanded who the strangers were, and what they wanted?—Upon which a sturdy fellow approached me, with a good-natured look, and said—“that he was the host of the inn, in which we had been carousing, and hoped, withal, that we should pay for the good cheer we seemed to have met with, as he was returned from the wars, poorer than when he went.”

“Good lack-a-day! (exclaimed Bianca) it must be our host Hurtado, that you speak of.”—

“Right (returned Drossi) that is his name, for he told me so himself, and as

I was

I was not present at his christening, I cannot dispute it, my old damsel."—

At this latter expression, Lady Isabella, with her usual mildness and good-nature, observed—"Drofi, this kind old woman, you know, has been our hostess; for my sake, therefore, answer her less abruptly."—

These few words from the Countess, had as much effect on Drofi, as almost six hours sound repose.—The susceptible fellow, therefore, begged poor Bianca's pardon, and promised his Lady not to offend again.—

"When our host, therefore, my Lord, (continued Drofi, with more gravity than before) made this request, I asked him what was his demand.—The captain of the party (who, I am sure, by his armour, is one of the Viceroy's body-guard) on
 B 5 this,

this, approached Hurtado, and whispered something in his ear—upon which mine host directly said to me, in reply, that he should not accept of less than ten pieces of gold.—My comrades thunderstruck at this exorbitant demand, collected themselves together at one end of the room, whilst the strange foldiers (accompanied with a loud laugh) began to regale themselves with the remnants of our wine; not having ten pieces of gold, my Lord, or near the value of it, among us all, we stood foolish and silent for some minutes. During this painful interval of suspense to us, I perceived that the captain was much diverted with our embarrassment, and whispering our host again: Hurtado immediately advanced towards us, and said—“ That for our farther delay, he must have five pieces more.”—Our amazement still farther encreasing, particularly

particularly when this ear-monger (for I cannot at present call him by any other name) perceiving us put our hands to the hilts of our swords, beckoned his men to unsheathe their scymitars, and protect the entrances. Discovering me to be the chief of our little party, he then advanced himself, and asked me, under whose command I served?—‘My Lord Rodolph’s,’ I replied. On this he turned his heel upon me, and *eared* mine host again.—Hurtado then addressed himself to me again, and farther added, ‘that as we were the retinue of Count Rodolph, he must have *fifteen* pieces of gold, or we should not stir from thence.’—Excuse me, my Lord, but at this last requisition, I could not refrain from laughing heartily myself, and a most happy laugh it was; for had I been boisterous or morose, we should

should, perhaps, have had treble that to pay. The captain, on this effusion of good-natured forbearance (as he termed it) told me, that I might go on to you, and if in case I brought back the fifteen pieces of gold, for his active and valiant friend Hurtado, my companions should be all set free; and if not, that he would put every man under an arrest, in the Viceroy's name, for having trespassed upon property that we were not legally entitled to. Then discovering that my legs were not quite so steady as they should have been, and my speech a little inarticulate, I suppose, or so, when I lisped out your Lordship's name, he ordered one of his party to conduct me safe to the road-side;—and as I departed, the military wag laughed most heartily.

“ Anxious to learn the cause of their
sudden

sudden and abrupt arrival at the inn, I enquired of my companion, drunk as I then was, who, without the least hesitation, informed me—that they had been dispatched to seize an alarming banditti, who had infested these parts, for four years and more. ‘The chief motive, however (said he) of our being sent hither, was at the instigation of Philip Count Contarini, who was attacked but two days ago, by these dangerous ruffians, between the Vale of Diana and the Appenine mountains, and there dangerously wounded by one of their chiefs.”

“*Wounded or killed, did he say?*”—exclaimed Rodolph, with a savage exultation sparkling in his eyes.

“Wounded, my Lord.”

“Said.

—“Said he, what brought Contarini so far southward?”

“He afterwards said, that the Count was on his way to Bellito.”

Rodolph paused on this reply for some time, and then, with much perturbation, directed Drofi to proceed.

“Hurtado (continued the stranger) who is now one of the Viceroy’s body-guard, and who was known to be well acquainted with the recesses along this part of the country, was deputed to be our guide in this expedition. His penetration was as rapid as it was fortunate, for he conducted us to a secret recess at the foot of the Appenines, where we surprized the robbers carousing. Finding themselves thus suddenly surprized, and seeing it impossible to extricate themselves, they fought with incredible fury.

fury.—Many fell in the conflict—some made their escapes through subterraneous passages. The two chiefs, however, were taken alive, and some few of their banditti. They have been since conducted, under a strong escort, to the Castle at Salerno, and will be sent forward in the morning to Naples.

“ I then, my Lord (continued Drofi) particularly and pointedly asked my companion, how they came to fasten on us at the inn, so suddenly and unexpectedly.”

“ Hurtado (he answered) expressed a wish to pay a visit to his old abode, as it was but a few paces out of their way. He also informed our commander (whom you may perceive is inclined to be merry and facetious) that he had left some choice flagons of wine behind him, when he had left it, which was a very persuasive

five

five inducement, indeed, with our chief, to comply with his request."

"And pray, my friend (said I, in return) may I be bold enough, to enquire the name of this merry hero?"

"Montano (he replied) captain in the King's body-guard".—Having by this time reached the road-side, my companion left me; and I staggered by myself, as well as I could, to the cottage door."

"Montano (exclaimed Rodolph, with rage and vexation, furiously depicted on his sable brow)—Montano—no wonder, then, my retinue have been thus insulted—myself still more so.—He is the bosom friend of my enemy, Contarini.—And, hell and furies! what is still worse, I must submit to this extortion.—Standing, as he does, a representative of the Viceroy's power, and holding you all in his possession,

possession, under the pitiful subterfuge of your having encroached upon the rights and privileges of another.—My pride, my spirit, must meanly submit to his domineering superiority. Here then, Drofi (continued the aggravated Count) here take him his paltry tribute of fifteen pieces, and haste to release your imprisoned companions.”

Drofi having set out for the inn, Rodolph requested the Countess to prepare herself to continue the journey that night, as his retinue could no longer occupy the inn, nor themselves remain at the cottage with any degree of safety, from such turbulent and vicious inclined neighbours.

No tidings could have been more welcome to the ears of the Countess, Carlo, and Sylvia, than these commands of Rodolph.

dolph. As for poor Bianca and her son, they were much distressed at the cause of their guests' departure; and still more enraged against those who had been the occasion of it. The former, indeed, bestowed a hearty curse on Hurtado, whom she was determined never to call, honest Hurtado, any more.

Drosi returned in a short time afterwards, with his ransomed comrades. He then informed Rodolph, that he had given the fifteen pieces of gold to captain Montano, who immediately transferred it over to Hurtado. Mine host as instantly offered me a couple of pieces, but I politely refused them; observing with all the gravity I possibly could—
 “ That the whole was little enough, for the quantity of his wine we had drank, and the excellent accomodations we had
 met

met with at his house." Captain Montano perceiving the constraint I put on my muscles, and the forced conceit I likewise put on my words, burst into a loud fit of laughter. Hurtado, on our departure, however, shook me heartily by the hand, and assured me, withal, that I should henceforth be a free and welcome guest at his house. In his apparent courtesy, my Lord, I thanked him, though in my heart I inwardly cursed their ill-timed merriment and extortion.

The Count and Countess having each made a handsome present to the poor cottagers; and Sylvia, Drossi, and Carlo, having also contributed to increase their purse, they pursued their journey, leaving Bianca and Thommaso gazing after them, till their tears finally clouded them from their farther view.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

If ancient sorrow be most reverent,
 Give mine the benefit of signiory;
 And let my griefs frown on the upper hand,
 If sorrow can admit society,
 Tell o'er your woes again, by viewing mine.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
 But in battalions.

SHAKESPEARE.

IT would be too tedious to relate every particular little incident, that the Count and his retinue met with, on their journey to his Castle in the hither Calabria: the leading features of them greatly similar to the former adventure; for seldom did they halt at any inn, or accidental house of accommodation,

accommodation, but what they saw the picture of Rinaldo figured or sketched in the principal apartments. One, indeed, of a superior nature was seen and admired by Rodolph, at Lauria, and which, for its beautiful colouring, close similitude, and noble effect, afterwards found its way to the Viceroy's Picture Gallery, at Naples. Though these exhibitions were disagreeable to the sight and feelings of the Count, they afforded his amiable wife the pleasing consolation that Santa-Maria was still existing, and that she should see her once again, before either had journeyed on to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."

About eleven leagues distant from Bellito, the Countess finding herself much fatigued, and perceiving a neat small house

house at hand, requested her Lord to halt there for an hour or two. Rodolph readily assented to this proposal, as he knew they could find no convenient accommodations at Castro-Villari, a poor town about a mile onward. Perceiving, therefore, a man disconsolately leaning over a gate, which led to the house, he requested an hour's admission for himself and his retinue to rest and refresh themselves. The fellow, on this, replied in the most churlish tone, that the house behind belonged to him, and that having already so severely suffered from wanderers and strangers, he was determined to admit no more. Therefore (concluded he) haste thee on to Castro-Villari; you will find something good enough for you there; at all events, you shall have nothing here."—Rodolph, exasperated at the peasant's uncouth

couth denial, was on the point of dismounting his horse, to insist on his admission, when the Countess, reclining her head on the window of the calash, requested them in heaven's name, to suffer her and another fatigued female to halt at his house, for a short hour or so. The man, more moved by Isabella's soothing and modest request, than the Count's menacing looks and commanding tones, made answer, " that the women might enter with welcome, but as for the men, there was not room to accommodate them ;" therefore advised them again to go on to Castro-Villari. Rodolph's pride, more than his inclination, persuaded him to accept the fellow's council, and promising to dispatch Drossi and Carlo back, in a couple of hours, for the Countess and Sylvia,

Sylvia, they all rode forward to the neighbouring town.

The peasant seeing their backs safely turned, he entered the house, and straight a female of the most comely appearance issued from the door, to welcome the Countess and her fatigued companion. They followed her in, and soon found themselves comfortably housed, with a good and homely repast prepared for them already by their host. When they had received a second blunt welcome from the peasant, he roughly observed, " You are both fatigued, I see—hungry too, perhaps—there, set too—there is something that will do you good—I hate ceremony, and I hate strangers much more so—make haste, therefore, and be gone—my daughter here will attend you—I shall go hence." On this, he turned round to the

young woman, and said, " Rachel, treat the women well. In the mean time, I shall go to my neighbour, Martin, and assist him in his vineyard.--Your servant.--I hate strangers, therefore avoid them.--A good repast to you both." On this, he sallied out of the house.

The Countess and Sylvia, though much astonished at their abrupt reception, sat down to their pottagio with a keen appetite. Having sufficiently refreshed themselves with this dish and a glass of wine, the former requested Rachel to be seated; and ever anxious to enquire after Santa-Maria's fate (as so many precious unexpected circumstances had occurred to warrant every enquiry) Isabella asked her young hostess the cause of her father's morose and abrupt behaviour. The girl hesitated some time to reply. " Pardon the

indelicacy, my dear (continued the Countess) of such a question, and be not afraid to open your heart to me—I am a mother, and an unhappy one withal—I feel for your father as a parent—I feel for you as a child also, and to all forlorn children, I am happy ever to be a mother.” On this, Isabella could not refrain from shedding tears, which being piteously observed by Rachel, she caught the sympathising affection; and thus briefly opened her heart to the Countess:

“As you appear so anxious, Madam, for our concerns, and so desirous (said Rachel) to know the cause of my father’s harsh disposition—harsh, indeed, it has only lately been, for, till of late, he was the softest and the kindest of parents—I have not much time to spare, to narrate my

my short tale; for in an hour or less he will most probably return—

“About two years ago, a young peasant came to our house, and begged some employment. He was an extraordinary handsome boy, and much resembled you, my Lady, in all his features. In very truth, when I first beheld your face, I could almost have sworn that he had been your son——But I wander, Madam——My father was falconer to the Lord Angelo, and took a mighty fancy to this strange youth. Finding him diligent and acute, he taught him all the arts of his profession—no *hawker*, in a short time, could be more expert than his engaging pupil—Alas! *engaging* I must call him, indeed, for in a short time after his abode in our house, my sister, Rosaline fell desperately in love with him. He, notwithstanding,

returned her passion with the greatest coolness; whilst she, poor maid! pining with extreme fondness, took most grievously to heart. At length, her fondness for him obliged her to tell our father, that without her dear Claudio (for so was he called) she must soon waste away with grief, and soon expire. Our good-natured parent, on this discovery, blamed her for the silence she had hitherto maintained; and with a smile of parental fondness, told her—that she should soon be happy with her beloved Claudio; for, next to her and myself, he valued him above all the world; and should be as overjoyed to call him his son, as she would be to call him husband. Happy were these glad assurances to the love-sick Rosaline. Ardentlly did she pant for the hour that was to make the beautiful Claudio—her's.

“ On

On the following morning, therefore, my father proposed the match to our young Falconer. He stammered and hesitated for some time. In reply, however, Claudio faintly said, that he must have some short period to consider on the subject. My father, at first, was angry at this return, but good naturedly laid it all to his modesty and diffidence; of which the youth possessed an uncommon share. From that day, Claudio lost all his wonted cheerfulness, and frequently, with the deep sigh of anguish, would grasp hold of Rosaline's hand, and weep most bitterly over it.—My father and sister, growing at last impatient for the nuptial ceremony, fixed upon the wedding-day. It was fixed, alas! but, ah! never to take place; for—two days before the marriage was fixed upon to be solemnized at Cosenza,

Claudio had clandestinely departed from our hospitable roof—never to return—Oh! never, never, my sweetest Lady; for since that time we have had no tidings of his fate and fortunes.—Ah! most ungrateful youth—most ungenerous Claudio!—my sister, on this, sunk into a state of deep despondency, which has increased upon her by degrees, and is now hourly expected to terminate in her dissolution. For this, Madam, my father has sworn to shut his former hospitable door to all strangers, thinking, perhaps, that some serpent, like the former, may be nourished in the bosom of his family; and then, like Claudio, sting the tenderest, dearest part of it, to death.”——At this latter expression, Rachel leaned her head upon her knees, and throwing her hands across her eyes—
wept bitterly.—

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The Countess, touched with the distress of Rachel, and too sensibly convinced from former circumstances, that some mystery relating to Santa-Maria was contained therein, requested to be shown into the chamber of Rosaline. The sister immediately assented. They accordingly ascended a narrow winding stair-case, accompanied by Sylvia, into the sick maiden's apartment. On approaching her bed-side, the Countess too fatally perceived, that poor Rosaline—the fair and innocent martyr to love—was *indeed* in a deep decline. Her eyes and cheeks were sunk. Her face was as the lily, wan; and death seemed quick approaching to release her from the vast load of grief and lamentation that she had so long struggled under:

Death lay on her, like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flow'r of all the field :

SHAKSPEARE.

Ifabella softly approached the bed—
Rosaline, however, remained insensible
of her kind approach. In the very twink-
ling of an eye, an object struck the Coun-
tess's view, that filled her with astonish-
ment, anguish, and pity.—This object was
the-----bracelet encircled round
Rosaline's arm, which she had given to
Santa-Maria, on her flight from the palace
of Rodolph. Every collateral circum-
stance flashed across her imagination in a
moment. On this discovery, Ifabella
yielding to the happy influx of a mother's
joy, clasped her hands, and lifting them
with her eyes to heaven, exclaimed,
“ God's will be done!—my child may
yet be living !”

Rachel, astonished at the sudden fer-

vour

your of this exclamation, and yielding to the influx of a sister's *feelings*, with some indignation exclaimed, likewise, " And is the ungrateful—the ungenerous—the inhospitable, cruel Claudio then, indeed, your son?"—

"Delay your impatience for a while, my young friend (replied the Countess) let us return below, and I will fully and ingenuously satisfy your curiosity."

After they had descended, and in some degree recovered from their mutual surprise, Isabella informed her fair hostess, that the cause of her sudden transports was owing to the bracelet that she had seen encircled round her sister's arm. That same bracelet, my dear girl, was once mine, and transferred by me to one whom from *her* birth I ever valued; and from *her* loss still value more than I do my

own happiness and existence. Alas! I never knew I loved *her* half so much till our cruel separation made me conscious of it.—I perceive your surprize, my dear girl, and easily divine the cause—know, then, that the boy whom you supposed to be Claudio—is my daughter—at least—she *was* my daughter.—Hapless Santa-Maria!—Ill fated Rosaline!-----But hark—I hear the trampling of horses,--- therefore let me be brief.—Here, child, take this ring--wear it for my sake;---it shall always be your passport to me.----I am the Countess Isabella, wife to the Lord Rodolph. We are now on our way to the Count's Castle, which stands only twelve leagues from this spot, south of Martorano.—Disclose the cruel adventure of Claudio's being my daughter, as early as you with safety can, to your sister,

Rosaline.

Rosaline.—My prayers for her recovery shall be offered up morning, noon, and night. When Rosaline, however, understands her dear Claudio was one of her own sex, disguised only to buffet the malice of the world, and to protect her from danger and insolence, she will, I hope, endeavour to conquer her malady—for the disease she labours under now is a fever of the mind, and not the body. The former can raise itself superior to all human considerations, let the other be sunk never so deep into decay. Break this untoward mystery to your father also.—It may soften his feelings; blunt the keen edge of anger he bears to all his fellow creatures; disperse the clouds of melancholy that hang over his parental anxious brow; and what is still more grateful to my hopes, may stimulate him to admini-

ster the balsam of consolation with more assurance than heretofore to his hapless child. To conclude, whether you succeed or no (and heaven forefend that it should be otherwise than what I wish) in your tender endeavours to restore so lovely a plant into the blooming bosom of day, let me speedily know the result—Restore but your sister, and I shall be happy. For, oh! believe me, my amiable girl, I would not have it chance, for thousands of gold, that my daughter had been—even the innocent cause of any creature's despair and dissolution; most specially of the fair Rosaline's—whose exquisite sensibility, not only merits a world of future joys and transports, but entitles her to the admiration and protection of every one who is blessed with that first of social virtues—a *feeling heart*."

The

The Countess had scarce concluded her maternal admonitions, when Drossi and Carlo returned to escort her forward to Castro Villari—It was fortunate that the falconer did not find his way home before them, as Rachel's eyes were so swollen, and her bosom was so convulsed with sobs, that would have excited his curiosity, and led him to insist on a farther explanation, which at this critical juncture would have been both unpleasant and distressing to Isabella. She left the whole, however, deeply recorded on the suffering Rachel's heart—of whom, both her and Sylvia now took a most tender and affectionate farewell.—

CHAP. III.

Ghosts fly on clouds, and ride on winds. They
rest together in their caves, and talk of mortal
men.

RUSSIAN.

They seemed almost, with staring on one another,
to tear the cases of their eyes.—There was speech
in their dumbness, language in their very ges-
ture.

SHAKESPEARE.

OUR travellers now continued their
journey, till they reached Cosenza, where
they halted.—Here Rodolph dispatched
a messenger forward to his kinsman, D'Ar-
cos, to signify his near approach towards
Bellito.—In two hours afterwards, they
found themselves at the gate of the Che-
valier's

valier's Castella, and the good Knight, with his niece, Lauria, and all his household, prepared, in the court yard, to receive them.—As Lauria, however, was assisting the Countess to alight from the calash, the latter, struck with her beauty, and the similitude of years, shape, and manners, between her and Santa-Maria, grasped tenderly hold of her hand, and turned on one side to give a secret freedom to her tears.—Lauria, notwithstanding, perceived her emotions, and participated in them.—These effusions, however, of mutual sympathy, sprung from different sources. One—thought and felt for a dear—dear child.—The other, knowing the dismal and hateful abode that was about to be the future residence of the Countess, and judging, also, that she was conscious of the same, innocently imagined

imagined, that she grieved merely from that idea alone, and, being a former sufferer there herself, the sweet impulse of sympathy taught her to feel for the approaching sufferings of others.

The good Chevalier entertained his guests that night with all the honours and hospitality due to their rank and affinity. D'Arcos perceived the Count anxious to have the paquet he had formerly sent him explained—Seeing the Countess, however, fatigued and depressed by her long journey, he recommended to them an early repose, and then, taking an opportunity of drawing his kinsman aside, D'Arcos informed him, that as he had some matters of importance to communicate, and alone, he would defer relating them till the morning.—

At an early hour, therefore, the Count
the
and

and Countess retired—the one anxious to hear the morning wonders of D'Arcos' tale; and the other equally so, to form an early and more familiar correspondence with Lauria.—Rodolph conjecturing that some new marvellous history was about to be brought forth, from the miraculous brain of his kinsman; and Isabella supposing that she might gather some farther intelligence of Santa-Maria, that would form a connection with what she had already collected.

Whilst every attention was paid to the guests above, the retinue of Rodolph did not fail of meeting with the utmost good cheer below—Francolisse, first and most favoured domestic of the Chevalier and his niece, took special care of Sylvia, Carlo, and Drossi, whom he had been previously given to understand were also
the

the favourite attendants of the Count and Countess.—He, therefore, conducted them to a neat, snug, little anti-chamber, exactly formed for a comfortable party of four, whilst a larger room was allotted for their companions.—In good fare, however, there was no distinction, and in neither party was there any envy.

—Francoliffe had just counted manhood, though he had been many years in the service of his good knight, and for his unshaken fidelity, and extreme good-nature, was esteemed above all the other domestics.—He was stout and blunt, and, what rendered him a greater favourite with Lauria, he was well conversed, and would, withal, *speake most copiously*.—When his guests, therefore, had finished their antipasto, he requested permission to pledge them all in a glass of wine.—I

one

have

have some flagons of the choicest lachryma-christi in yonder closet (said the youth) that will cheer your spirits, if none of you have any objection to taste it."

"There is one in company (observed Carlo, dryly, and giving his uncle an arch look)—that I am sure will have no objection to taste of it, as long as there is a flagon left."—

"Right, boy; and, though no conjuror, like thy mother, thou canst prophecy well and truly at times.—Come, my brave lad, hawl out your lachryma-christi, and, for thy pains (said Drofi, with a view of having a little innocent revenge on his nephew) thou shalt have thy stool next this pretty damsel here.—Eh! Sylvia? what say you, lass?"

Francolise took Drofi at his word,
and

and having placed a large flagon of wine on the table, he fixed a stool for Sylvia near the fire-side, and seated himself directly close to her.—This was, at first, unpleasant to the susceptible feelings of Carlo; for Francolisse, like himself, was a comely youth.—The former's good-nature, however (equalled only by that of the other's, soon overlooked this mischievous trick of his uncle's) who, now wishing to enjoy himself comfortably and plentifully over a flagon of his favourite beverage, prefaced his second draught with thanking Heaven, that their journey was nearly over, and that they now might think themselves happy dogs in having found, at last, a resting place for life.

On this, Francolisse shook his head, with much importance, and replied—

“ Heaven

"Heaven truly grant that you all may find it so?"

"Pish—I know it—I know it (returned Drosi) and if I know it, that's enough.—Come Sylvia, my girl, take a hearty draught—the wine is excellent.—No squeamishness, no shaking of your head.—We shall all be happy, I say, again.—No more squabbling and fighting, nothing now but harmony, good feasting, good eating, and good drinking."

Francolisse on this, filled the goblets round, and again shaking his head, as he pushed them about, he said, "I fear, my brave veteran, you will find no great harmony where you are shortly going to."

"And marry, why not (replied Drosi) explain boy—I fear nought, no not I."—

"Aye, uncle (observed Carlo) I know you fear no man—no, nor any human dangers.

dangers.—But in good faith, my heart forebodes some ill, in going to this same Castle.”

“Alack-a-day! and so doth mine,” returned Sylvia, with a heavy sigh.

“And in plain truth, so ye may (exclaimed Francoliffe) Ah! I shall never forget the times when I was there; after my master had taken possession of the Castle. When Lord Rodolph, consigned it over to the protection of my master, the Chevalier, we were all hastened thither, and not a night afterwards did we enjoy the least repose. Such continued knockings, such hammerings, as though all the masons in Naples were at work within the Castle.—Such frightful warnings and lamentations.—The chapel tapers extinguished at one moment, and then illumined on the next; and heaven only knows by whom.

The

The black banners hoisted on one night, at top of one tower, and on the next fixed on another—Oh! Lord have mercy upon ye all, and grant ye patience and fortitude to support these trying, melancholy scenes.”

The pencil and not the pen, could best describe the alternate emotions of fear, surprize, and horror, that ran through the features of Carlo and Sylvia, at this terrible description given of the Castle.—Neither could speak—they sat staring and gaping in each other's faces, as though they had been petrified. Drossi, however, was not so soon alarmed, but putting down the flagon on the table, which had been suspended between his breast and his mouth, for the last minute or two; he exclaimed—“ Hold, hold, my lad—come, come, this is going a little

little too far.—You are a good hand, I find, at romancing—where did you pick up all this—did you find it in Merlin's Cave; or did your grandam teach you, to get it by heart?—It's a rare invention, in faith, and almost makes me laugh. I like your ingenuity, my lad—but see, how you have scared that chicken-hearted mongrel there.—His dam, I remember, was also a rare one at these rhodomontade stories. She prophesied once, that a goose would fly away with the Monte di Somma—Hoisting black banners, indeed!—you better had told us, whilst you were about it, that they had hoisted black devils round all the turrets and towers in the Castle.

“For holy St. Mark's sake, uncle (tremblingly exclaimed Carlo) don't be so prophane—don't talk of devils, I

little I

conjure

conjure you ; but suffer Francolisse to proceed in his story about the Castle, that we may be put on our guard against all evil spirits and dæmons." This request being strongly seconded by the trembling Sylvia also, Drossi consented to hear out the rhodomontade tale of the Castle (as he called it.)—Though on condition that he might afterwards tell the story of the devil having once flown away with the Pope's night-cap, as he lay snoring in the Vatican. " That old witch, Carlo's dam (said he) told me all about it, and I have never forgot it since."

C H A P. IV.

No nat'ral exhalation in the sky,
 No 'scape of nature, no distemper'd day,
 No common wind, no custom'd event,
 But they will pluck away its natural cause,
 And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs
 Abortive, presages, and tongues of Heaven.

SHAKSPEARE.

“**T**HE Count and Countess (continued Francoliffe) I well know from my young mistress, Lauria, are to hear what I am now about to relate; otherwise, if silence had been enjoined, not a word of the matter should have escaped from my lips. Our silence, notwithstanding, would shortly have availed little, as it will arrive but too soon to your own knowledge;

ledge ;—therefore, as I said before, when we were all ordered into the castle, nothing but these dismal noises could be distinguished.—They began about midnight, and nearly ended by sun-rise. I was greatly alarmed, and was on the point of quitting the good knight's service."

"Lack a-day ! Lack-a-day ! (exclaimed Carlo and Sylvia, in one breath)—and well you might."

"I beseech ye, friends (observed Francolisse) do not interrupt me, or you will break the thread of my story."

"Right, right, boy (exclaimed Drosi, emptying off a whole goblet of wine, and laughing all the time in the sleeve of his doublet) ;—you must not be interrupted, as it may *disturb* your story. —And if that scare-crow in the corner

there, offers to do so again, I will expose him, by telling the story of his mother's enticing a young man to go and gather her some enchanting herbs, that she said grew upon Mount St. Goddard. But when he got about two miles high, he was assaulted with a great heap of snow and stones, which with the violence of the wind, whirled him headlong to the very bottom of *The Bridge of Hell*.—And for what we all know, the poor young fellow may be there still.”

Thus Drosi mended the business, by throwing three stones for one. Franco-liffe, however, finding all silent again, thus resumed his story:—

“ Well, I was greatly alarmed, and, as I said before, was frequently on the point of quitting the good knight's service. He laughed, however, at my fears,

when

when I mentioned the doleful noises that I had heard. My young Lady, Lauria, who, though she slept above, near the western tower, was alarmed also at the nightly disturbances that came across her repose. She first mentioned it to her uncle, and then to *me*. He likewise ridiculed the idleness of her fancy, though, as I have often observed, he himself frequently appeared gloomy and disconcerted when he arose. Well, when my Lady Lauria spoke to *me* on the subject, she entered upon it with all that great learning which she is possessed of. ‘*Francolisse* (said my Lady) nothing disturbs me so

When these same bells ring (continued she) it is a certain demonstration, that some one or another is about to expire. My uncle, you well know, has searched

over the most secret parts of the Castle, and he can discover no human being, nor the cause of these nocturnal soundings. When this doleful bell, therefore, rings thus nightly, it must proceed from supernatural effects.—It must either denote that some Christian soul is just departing, to bespeak the prayers of his brethren and sisterhood; or, on the other hand, to drive away the evil spirits that stand about the bed's foot, and about the house, ready to seize their prey, or at least to terrify and molest the soul in its passage. But, *Francolisse* (again observed my learned young Lady) there may have been some murder committed in this Castle.—In that case, the ringing of bells will keep the spirits away.—For spirits, particularly evil ones, are much afraid of bells.—Ever since we have resided here,

here, the hammerings and the sounds of the bell have increased; for the louder the sound—mark me, *Francolisse*—the louder the sound, the spirit or spirits must go farther off to be clear of the noise; besides, being heard farther off, it will likewise procure the poor departed soul a greater number of prayers. This dislike of spirits to bells is, as (according to what I have heard my good old grandame say) the evil spirits that be in the region of the air, do mock when they hear the bells ringing, and that is the cause why the bells be rung when it thunders, and when great tempests and outrages of weather happen; to the end that the fiends and wicked spirits should be abashed and fly, and cease the moving of the tempest.

“ In this manner (continued Franco-

liffe, though not without being frequently interrupted by the bubbling of the lachryma-christi, as it descended in torrents down Drossi's throat, and some half intelligible curses muttered by him against all witches, old dams, and grandams) did my young Lady learnedly express herself to me.—When, at the conclusion of her story, the alarum bell rang two hours before its usual time. It never struck before till midnight, and at this time, it wanted full two hours of its former sounding. It struck, moreover, louder to my Lady's years than it ever did before.—She started from her seat, unusually alarmed and amazed.—The bell continued ringing still louder and louder, when she departed in haste to her own apartment; saying, as she went—‘*Francolisse*, I will not, I cannot stay longer in this detested Castle; for

for it is, no doubt, haunted by some murderers or evil spirits. On this she hastened to the chamber where her women were; and I immediately repaired to the refectory, and repeated to my brother domestics, what had just passed between *me* and *my* Lady."

"And now (said Drosi, interrupting Francolisse) as you have told us I suppose, all that passed between *you* and *your* Lady—what say ye all—and you too, my little Sylvia, to drink her Ladyship's health?"

To this they all readily consented—though Carlo could not drink off his wine, before he had paid many high-flown compliments to the great learning of Lady Lauria; and the sublime ideas she possessed in regard to fiends, evil spirits, and supernatural agency.—“ Her wonder-

ful arguments (he said) respecting the necessity of ringing the bells to keep off those fiends and disturbed spirits, dwelt strongly on his mind, and which would be treasured up in his memory as long as he lived."

Drofi could not refrain from laughing at the simplicity in which he uttered these last words. Then, after expressing a hearty wish that the fiends, or spirits, or whatever they were, would give them a hearty peal, when they marched into the Castle; he told Frâncolisfe, he might proceed if he chose, and that after he had done, he would give them the story of Carlo's mother—about the devil and the pope.

CHAP. XXVI.

————— A thousand fantasies
 Begin to throng into my memory,
 Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire,
 And airy tongues, that syllable men's names
 On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.

MILTON.

DROSI being once more silent, Francolisse thus proceeded in his story, without any farther interruption:

“ Well, when I joined the company of my fellow servants in the refectory, the tolling of the alarum bell had ceased. It was near midnight when I had concluded my story.—The very—very moment, however, that I had finished the same, a louder ringing was heard than

before.—It was the loudest we had heard since our residence in the Castle.—We all started up, scared almost out of our senses—never did I hear any thing so extraordinarily marvellous.—The Chevalier, during our fright, entered the refectory, alarmed at the noise himself, with his sword drawn. “It is wonderful (exclaimed the knight, as the bell continued to toll, and, at the same time, impressively grasping the hilt of his sword between his two hands)—this is wonderful, indeed!”—The Chevalier spoke these few words with uncommon energy—the bell still continued to sound, and now, as loud as its clapper would admit.—This last peal brought Signiora Lauria down again, who exclaimed, as she descended into the refectory—“Oh! my dear uncle, I cannot, nay, will not, abide longer

longer in this horrid Castle."—This determined avowal, produced a general effect; for we, one and all, declared our resolution thereon, either to quit the Castle, or yield up our services.—The Knight, on this, took hold of his niece's hand, and affectionately assured her, that early in the morning, we should all leave the Castle, for our former tranquil abode. This, you may be sure, was a more welcome sound to us than any we had hitherto heard; and such was our joy, that we all set up a general shout on the occasion. Our joy, however, was shortly changed to fresh terror and amazement, more so than we had ever experienced before; for the troubled spirit of the Castle, or whatever it might be, in order to strengthen us still farther in our fixed resolution, tolled the bell exactly three times, in slow and solemn changes,

changes.—During this interval of awful silence, we heard, with horror inexpressible, a distant and feeble voice slowly exclaim ————— *Haste—be—gone—intrude yourselves no longer in a place that belongs to virtue—sorrow—and devotion;—for here none but the noble and true possessor shall ever find repose.* ————— These words were also repeated three times—Heaven knows, we heard them distinctly enough the first, without the invisible agent repeating them again.—My Lady Lauria, when she had recovered a little from this last shock, faintly observed, that her fears and weakness would not suffer her to part from her uncle that night.—My Lord, though struck with unusual astonishment, summoned his wonted fortitude and presence of mind together, then addressing himself to us all, he asked,

ed, who dared to venture, once more, with him, to explore the Castle over and over again?—For, that there is some human agent concealed therein (said he) I have not the shadow of a doubt.—To suppose, for a moment, also, that the voice we just heard, was any thing of a supernatural nature, would be the height of folly, ignorance, credulity, and superstition.—Or, to imagine, likewise, that the ringing of the alarum bell, was the effect of the winds, would be equally foolish.—Who, then (concluded the knight) will follow and assist me, in endeavouring, for the last time, to unravel this strange mystery?—

“Perceiving our Lord determined, we all readily consented, to follow him.—Signiora Lauria, however, on seeing this, caught hold of *my* cloak and exclaimed—

‘*Francolisse*, you must continue here with me and the females, for here with them alone, I cannot remain.’—The Chevalier hearing this, ordered me to remain with his niece, though I hardly knew at the time, whether to prefer going with my fellow-servants, or staying where I was. To make short, however, of this eventful tale (said *Francolisse*, observing *Drofi* getting drowsy, and in danger every moment of tumbling from his stool) my Lord *D’Arcos*, in an hour or more, returned, without being able to satisfy himself a jot farther than he had ever done before. — On this, we sat all together in the refectory for that night, and, early in the morning, after fastening all the gates, and securing the keys, we, with overjoyed hearts, retired to our old peaceful mansion here.”

The

The effect that Francolisse's story of the Castle had upon Carlo and Sylvia, corresponded with all the horrors they would have experienced had they been actual auditors of the terrors that he had only related.—The greatest effect it had upon Drofi, was nearly setting him into a sound sleep, which would certainly have been the case, had he not politely determined within himself to see his old friend, lachryma-christi, safe out, before he went to bed. Had that, however, not been the case, Drofi would have paid as much attention as he possibly could have done to Francolisse's story, had it been ten times more marvellous; for civility and good-nature were the predominant features of his character—particularly to the friendly stranger—whilst gratitude and attention were ever uppermost in his breast,

breast, when hospitality stretched forth her generous hand to afford him comfort and good cheer.

As for Carlo and Sylvia, they continued some time speechless. The former, however, having recovered his tongue, first exclaimed, "That he would not go on to the Castle."

"Nor I, either, Carlo," returned Sylvia.

"Then marry, coward (said Drossi, after his old friend had revived and warmed him a little, "whither will you go?"

"I am no coward, uncle, but I will go wander in the forests first."

"And I also (replied the simple Sylvia.

"What (returned Drossi) to starve, and afterwards afford delicate food to hawks and

He

and carrions? Or, to put your courage really to the proof, to meet with desperate robbers and hungry wolves?—Can you fight with them, think ye, chicken? Or which prefer ye—which would you choose, hen-hearted poltroon, to be minced in pieces by a banditti, or nibbled to atoms by a horde of wild beasts?—Quotha! what have either of you to fear now? Spirits will not devour ye.—Oons—Spirits, I hear, have no bodies, nor blood, nor guts, to stomach such a brace of delicate mortals as ye are! Are thy consciences good? if they are, why then be afraid of spirits? My honest friend here has told a marvellous good round tale, and excellently well withal. It suits your nature and complexion well, thou half-bearded fool—what, thou hast not forgot the notions of that preposterous old witch, your mother. I thought I had beat them

all

all out of thy credulous skull; or am I to begin my labour over again?"

These severe retorts of Drofi not only altered the first resolutions of Carlo and Sylvia, but occasioned much chagrin in the countenance of Francolisse. The latter observed, that he talked it well, "But marry, my friend (said he) if the Castle is troubled with such guests as were there about four years ago, you will not long abide there; no, notwithstanding all your mighty boastings."

"Be not heated, my good young friend (exclaimed Carlo, perceiving his uncle nettled, being called a *boaster*; for touch but on Drofi's courage with any kind of contempt, all friendship with him at once was at an end) be not heated, I say. My uncle is somewhat choleric, and rather severe withal. I will not say churlish—no

no—

no— (perceiving Drossi looking him full in the face) no—no—not at all churlish—not in the least, I assure you; a little pleasant or so; that's all. But in answer (continued Carlo with much gravity) to what you both have said, I can only add, that I believe your story of the Castle, Signior Francolisse, to be probable and true; but then whatever spirit, or fiend, or devil, might have haunted it four years ago, might have been calmed by this time.

“ The ringing of the bell (as Signiora Lauria so learnedly observed on the occasion) at that distant period, might be owing to some Christian soul just departing, to bespeak the prayers of his brethren and sisterhood; or, on the other hand, to drive away the evil spirits that stand about the bed's foot, and about the house, ready to seize their prey; or at least to terrify

rify and molest the soul on its passage. These obstacles, after so long a course of time, therefore, may have been removed, and the bells, of course, have ceased to ring. At least, it is to be supposed that the one will die away with the other—But if, again, as Signiora Lauria observed (continued Carlo, with great critical dignity) there has been any murder committed in the Castle; in that case, the ringing of bells will keep the spirits away, for spirits (particularly evil ones, as she said) are much afraid of bells—now, observe me, is it not very probable, that some person in this old Castle has been murdered at one time or another (whether formerly or not); if that has really been the case, is it not more preferable to be continually dinned with the ringing of bells, as it keeps the spirits away, rather

ther than by the discontinuing of this ringing, have the spirits perpetually stalking all night long about the Castle, and sitting themselves down at our bed's feet, when we all want to go quietly and soberly to our pillows? What think ye, uncle, is this reason, or is it not?"

Drofi could not help enjoying the simplicity of his nephew; though there was a *particular part* in his *last argument* that had forced itself upon his attention.

"And then, again (continued Carlo, pleased with the supposed attention his uncle paid to his great power of reasoning) what said Signiora Lauria's learned grandame, on the subject?—why—That the bells ring when it thunders, and when
great

great tempests and outrages of weather happen, to the end that the fiends and wicked spirits should be abashed, and fly, and cease the moving of the tempest.—If so, should we not consider the ringing of the bells as a happy omen to forewarn us of our approaching danger, to prepare ourselves for hurricanes, eruptions, and earthquakes, so common among us—for what are they but ‘ great tempests and outrages of weather?’ Under all these favourable influences, I would therefore prefer going thither, than being minced by a banditti, or nibbled to pieces by wolves (for this remark of Drossi’s had at the time a wonderful effect both on Carlo and Sylvia; it had also led him into the above learned dissertation—though, like him, we all endeavour to reconcile ourselves

selves to a comparative ill when we can
 avoid a superlative one)—and, as for
 what you said, uncle (continued he) about
 that preposterous old witch, my mother—
 you wrong her—for she was alike good
 and devout, and not at all unskilful in pro-
 phesy; for I do not know whether it may
 turn out true or not, but I recollect she
 told me, that I should see and hear strange
 things about my twenty-third year; and
 that all this should take place in a strange
 Castle.”

“ By St. Marco (exclaimed Drosi, per-
 ceiving there would be no end to his ne-
 phew’s stories, if he was suffered to go on
 at his own will) no more of your folly,
 firrah, or I will hurl this flagon at your
 shallow pate ! All angry words, how-
 ever, were now put an end to by the

watch-porter's entering and announcing the hour of separation. On this, they all drank good repose to each other, and parted as they had met, contented, convivial, and friendly.

The count of minutes never had the least
Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound of the
Swift as a shadow, there as any dream.
— Take daily
That once was mistress of the field, and flourish'd
I'll hang my head and perish.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN the main-bell had rung for breakfast, an unexpected confusion ensued throughout the whole mansion. The minister, florist, and general companion of Laura was missing, and no where to be found. He had not been seen, in fact,

CHAP.

E 2

watch-porter's entering and announcing
the hour of separation. On this, they all
drank good repose to each other, and
parted as they had parted, con-
vivial and friendly.

CHAP. VI.

The course of true love never did run smooth,
Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream.

————— Like the lily

That once was mistress of the field, and flourish'd,
I'll hang my head and perish.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the matin-bell had rung for
breakfast, an unexpected confusion en-
sued throughout the whole mansion. The
minstrel, Florizel, and dearest companion
of Lauria was missing, and no where to
be found. He had not been seen, in fact,

at his hospitable abode most part of the preceding day, nor during the whole night. Fear, distraction, and confusion, predominated alternately in every quarter; for Florizel had not only been the dearest favourite of his young mistress, but also the choicest of the Chevalier's, and, indeed, with every domestic in the Castella; a partiality he had successfully and deservedly obtained, not only by his exquisite skill on the *lute*, but also by his good nature, modesty, softness, and beauty.

The good old knight, terrified lest Florizel should be surpris'd in his excursions about the forest, or on the banks of the river Crati (both of which were sometimes visited by robbers, and the Corsairs of Barbary) immediately dispatched Francolisse, and all his domestics, by different ways, in search of him.

Lauria,

Lauria, in the mean time, accompanied by the Lady Isabella, disconsolately retired to her apartment, to ruminate on the loss and uncertain fate of Florizel—no one (as we have already frequently observed) was more capable of applying the healing balsam of consolation to the wounded mind, than the amiable Countess of Rodolph. Her tender applications shortly probed the wound, and afforded vent to the severe anguish it contained; for, Lauria, entirely *forgetting* the task allotted to her by the Chevalier, of privately disclosing the mysteries of the Castle to her noble guest; and contemplating alone on the sudden absence of her dear Florizel—she tremblingly clasped hold of the Countess's hand, and bedewing it with her tears—Lauria—the agonized Lauria—with irresistible tenderness, exclaim—

ed—"Oh! my dear Lady Isabella—
 suffer me—Oh! suffer me to lay my whole
 heart open to you.—You have been a
 wife—a mother—all—all that is dear and
 kind have you been—Forgive me, Lady,
 I have heard all from my most affectionate
 father.—Father, I always call the good
 Chevalier D'Arcos, for such he has ever
 been to me. Pardon me—But—he has
 told me all concerning—your daughter,
 Santa-Maria. Nay, do not weep—this
 only have I mentioned as a prelude to my
 sad history.—Each of us, thus conscious
 of our mutual misfortunes, may be more
 fully enabled to administer unto each
 other the lessons of comfort, resignation,
 and fortitude. Alas! (said Lauria, her
 tears and sighs almost choking her utter-
 ance) I need those lessons much. Oh! my
 my Lady, look upon me now as your daugh-
 ter—

ter—feel for me as such, and guide my wandering senses how to steer through the vortex of misery and disappointment, in which they are now enlabyrinthed.

“It is nearly bordering on two years (continued Lauria, strengthened and consoled by Lady Isabella’s tenderness, and her kind assurances of an unabated mother’s friendship and affection) when Florizel, the minstrel, who has so unexpectedly caused the alarm you have heard, came first into the service of my uncle—I heard him playing on his lute in the forest hard by, and touched with the sweetness of his melody, invited him to our mansion. He accompanied me and my female attendant (though not till after a great many persuasions) directly homewards. The Chevalier, like me, was as much

pleased with the innocence and modesty of his looks and demeanour, as he was at the exquisite skill with which he touched his lute. Upon this, he invited him to accept of an asylum in his mansion. Florizel consented with pleasure and gratitude; and the first task, or rather recreation, that he undertook, was teaching me to play upon his lute. Finding me an apt scholar, he requested my uncle to provide another instrument, that we might alternately entertain him with our harmony. He of course cheerfully assented, and many and oft's the time, that I have heard the good knight declare, that those have been the happiest hours of his life when we played to him on our lutes. Not to trespass tediously, my Lady, on your patience, by dwelling too long on the many, many happy days that we thus innocently enjoyed

joyed together, I became so fondly enamoured of the youth, that nought but the nuptial ceremony could relieve my love-sick heart. Often would I exclaim to Florizel—Oh ! that thou hadst been nobler born ; for, in mind, thou couldst not be nobler engifted. To this only would Florizel reply with a deep sigh—Finding my passion, however, for him daily increase, I worked up my mind to the determined resolution of disclosing the secret workings of my soul to the Chevalier. This I conceived first to be my strictest duty. Compliance I did not, indeed, expect. My duty, however, being thus far discharged, I was determined, if my fond applications were repulsed, to consult my future happiness without controul. I said nothing to my adored Florizel, respecting my intention. It is now,

my Lady, only four days since, when with trembling steps, I entered my uncle's closet; with a voice equally agitated I briefly disclosed my passion—The dear—the good—the tender knight heard me out with patience; and then—Oh! what sudden joy and surprize I experienced, when, instead of an expected refusal, he cheered my spirits with the smile of compliance; and affectionately laying hold of my hand, thus kindly made me answer—‘Lauria, my most amiable Lauria—you have now only repeated, what I have discovered long before. I perceived your passion for young Florizel, and only attended with anxiety to see, whether you preferred joining your hand and heart with wealth, title, and dignity, or to merit, modesty, and virtue. Lauria, well am I acquaint-

ed

ed with your heart and disposition. Well also have I searched into the nature of your adored Florizel, and have found it equally virtuous, pure, and meretorious. Therefore, take your Florizel. He will make you happy; aye, my adopted girl, happier than could a diadem perhaps. I hate distinctions when virtue interferes, much more so, when with virtue comes *smiling inclination*—I am not, my dearest Lauria, without fame and honour. My own actions have ranked me high upon our Neapolitan lists; and though the *youngest* brother of your deceased father, my wealth will make ye happy and independent.—But the crest I wish *you* to wear, is virtue leagued with modesty and merit. In you and Florizel, they are all combined.—Therefore, my child (concluded the Che-

valier, folding me tenderly in his arms) receive the blessings of your affectionate uncle, and do you, yourself, disclose to Florizel the extreme happiness and excellent transports, he is about to enjoy with you."

At this part of Lauria's narrative, the recollection of her uncle's fondness, and the cruel absence of Florizel, fixed her in a state of silent despondency for some minutes. In these moments Isabella's prompting angel whispered in her ear, that the minstrel, Florizel, was no other than her daughter, Santa-Maria. His beauty, modesty, and most particularly his exquisite skill upon the lute, almost confirmed him to be so. The Countess took this pause of Lauria for farther reflection. "If thus it proves (thought Isabella) that this same minstrel is truly Santa-Maria; I am first completely
blessed,

bleſſed, in the fond idea that ſhe is ſtill
alive; and next, that I may ſhortly ſee her
once again. Still (conceived the prudent
matron) ſtill, it will be dangerous to ma-
niſeſt the feelings that I have already
done, on my happy journey hither, and
on ſimilar occaſions. My ſilence may
keep the beautiful Lauria from deſpair,
for whiſt hope exiſts, expectation will
be indulged; and,

The miſerable have no other medicine
But only hope.

SHAKSPEARE.

At the ſame time, it was doubtful to
her, that when the Count became inform-
ed that ſhe had been ſo near at hand, and
could not as yet be probably removed to
any great diſtance off, that his reſentment
and head-ſtrong temper might revive his
turbulent

turbulent and unrelenting soul once more to persecute and harass his wandering child, for the empty vanity of his honour and his house—" *Alas ! alas* (concluded Isabella in her own mind) *would to God, that my lost boy, Ferdinand, the beautiful counterpart of his unfortunate sister, was but now alive, to render the love-distracted Lauria happy in all her fondest FEMALE transports and expectations !*"

Signiora Lauria, after apologizing for her sudden absence of mind, thus continued—"Notwithstanding the tender encouragement, my Lady, that I had received from my uncle, I had not courage enough to disclose it to the young and beautiful Florizel. My modesty refused me that gratification; and I requested the Chevalier to relate the subject of our interview himself. He consented to this

as readily as he had done before to the other.

“The time appointed by my uncle, for this purpose, was the following evening. At that time I usually took my rambles in the neighbouring forest. On the morning, however, preceding this, I met Florizel in the hall, and he then appeared to my fond imagination, more cheerful and beautiful than I had ever observed him to be before. Being enchanted, as it were, with his vivacity and the transcendant lustre that beamed unconscious from his sparkling eyes, I anticipated my good uncle’s design, and I may ingenuously add, with the most delicious satisfaction.—Florizel received the intelligence with tears of joy, and tenderly pressing his downy lips to mine, exclaimed—‘Then I shall be—happy, indeed.

deed.—The—happiest of—and here his transports interrupted his articulation.—This mutual, though silent declaration of reciprocal love, swam like a new, a heaven-gifted birth into my soul—It raised my spirits to the utmost zenith of exultation, delight, and joy; for never till then did I experience sensations so exquisitely sublime. To conclude, therefore, my Lady, after we had given and received the fondest congratulations on our approaching happiness; Florizel, drew a diamond cross from his neck, and putting it round mine, exclaimed—Accept this, my dearest Signiora, as a pledge of the everlasting affection I shall continue to bear you.—It was bestowed on me, by the dearest and most amiable of friends; since that period of its gift, I have found none so deserving of wearing it as your-
self.

self. Transported with this fresh and precious emblem of mutual tenderness, I eagerly snatched the ring from off my finger, that had been given to me by my dying aunt, and nearly repeating my best love's words (for I had the very same occasion for them) I placed it on his. Florizel, accepted the boon with rapture, though as he kissed it, I could perceive the tear gliding down his beauteous cheek. These love ceremonies being performed, we parted with repeated vows of constancy and affection.—But alas! since that hour—ah! woe is me—that very hour—my darling minstrel has not been seen or heard of (as it is reported) in or near our mansion.”——

Here the poor agonized Lauria, sighed heavily and paused;—her fair countenance, for some moments was so strongly
and

and wildly agitated, with love and disappointment, as to strike the tender bosom of Isabella with the most poignant anguish. A flood of tears, however, happily found their passage from her swollen eyes, and afforded a temporary relief to the oppression of her mind. On this, Laura had recourse to the only pleasing consolation, that was at present left her—the gift of her beloved Florizel.—She drew it, therefore, from the soft and secret avenues of her throbbing bosom—kissed it with ecstacy indescribable, whilst the scalding tear of anguish, fell unconscious on the holy relic;—then keeping it fixed before her eye, she offered up a brief, a fervent prayer, to the immaculate being, whose sacred antitype it was—to watch over and protect the pious and virtuous Florizel—to restore him in
safety

safety to her arms; and when sanctioned by his divine rites, to crown their mutual loves, with his propitious smiles!

But here, oh! how can I describe the emotions of the Lady Isabella, when she beheld the same cross presented by her to Santa-Maria, held forth directly to her view. All her former surmises of the minstrel, were now established, without leaving the shadow of a doubt behind.

Had Lauria been ever so deeply absorbed in reflection, the sudden alteration of Lady Isabella's countenance and manner, and the visible perturbation of her spirits, could not well have escaped her. Perceiving her eyes, however, steadfastly fixed upon the crucifix she held in her hand, Lauria, with an equal degree of surprize and agitation, questioned her on the cause thereof.—The Countess on this

this quick appeal to her feelings, instantly recollected herself, and with a recovered air and tone, calmly replied.—

“ That she had been contemplating with some degree of astonishment, how the minstrel could have obtained a jewel of such considerable value, to bestow.”

This replication carried along its intended effect; the unsuspecting, unhappy Lauria, immediately observed thereon—

“ That she had often seen the cross, before it came into her possession, and as often discovered Florizel on his knees, in fervent prayer before it. I wondered also, my dearest Lady, how he came by so valuable a jewel, but as I had often questioned him before, relating his birth, and the other circumstances of his fortunes; and always finding the subjects irritable to his feelings, my delicacy and
blow fondness

fondness for Florizel, would never afterwards suffer me to interrogate him farther on them, or any other.

Just as Lauria had finished this observation, she discovered Francoliffe entering the court-yard; and, followed by the Countess, precipitately descended towards the hall. Here she was met by her uncle, who with tears bursting from his aged eyes, informed his distracted niece, that Florizel, notwithstanding the most diligent search and enquiry, could no where be found. On these mournful heart-breaking tidings, Lauria turned from her adopted parent, and without uttering a single word, ascended once more to her chamber; there to yield herself up to all those bitter, galling, hell-created agonies of despair, that accompany disappointed love. Lady Isabella

would have followed, but Lauria refused. Solitude was more welcome by far.—The frantic maiden soon hurried into her apartment, and fastening the door, to guard off any officious intrusion, she threw herself despondently on the bed—rent her fine hair—called upon her lost love—her beloved Florizel; and at each fond remembrance of past endearments, the gushing tears burst from her blood-shot eyes—

Like dew-drops from the lion's mane.

SHAKSPEARE.

The Countess, in the mean time, though urged by the good Chevalier, very prudently refused to persevere in accompanying his niece to her chamber.

—Grief so bitter, so piercing as her's, was best allayed by solitude; all consola-

tion,

tion, she knew, would at first rather aggravate, then alleviate the violence of her sorrows.—Isabella, alas ! had well learned that sad lesson, by woeful experience.—She had her sorrows too (as we have already seen) and bitter ones withal.—

The Countess having retired likewise to her own chamber, she began to pursue the same train of reflections as had lately occurred, in regard to the hapless Rosaline.—That her wandering child had been the cause, though innocently so, of both her's and Lauria's despair, gave her the most poignant anguish. Her *oath*, however, so solemnly given to her Almighty Creator, at Bianca's cottage, and at a period, when the succeeding fatal adventures reached beyond the bounds of her mind's probability, accounted for the duplicity (if we can call it by so harsh a name) that
she

she had exercised both towards Rosaline and Lauria. The Countess, however, was resolved to obtain permission of Lord Rodolph, for herself and Sylvia, to remain behind, for a time, at the Chevalier's Castella; to watch over and administer every maternal consolation to the love-enthusiast Lauria; and that then, if, after a reasonable period had elapsed, her grief did not take a more favourable turn, Isabella ultimately determined within herself, to disclose the secret of Santa-Maria's sex and birth, as she before had done to the amiable sister of Rosaline.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd.

Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,
Thou would'st as soon go kindle fire with snow,
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE sudden alarm of Florizel's long absence, and the succeeding intelligence that Francolisse gave, of his ill success in his enquiries after the hapless fugitive, retarded the appointed interview between the Chevalier and his noble guest. It was not till the evening, therefore, before Rodolph was conducted into the private closet of D'Arcos. The Count

seated himself in an attitude of reflection, but turning his eye unconsciously about the chamber, the first objects that came across him——were the very pictures of Rinaldo and Santa-Maria, that he had formerly discovered, concealed within the despoiled trunks at the Castle. He made no particular observation on this hateful discovery, but uttered within himself.—“For ever and ever, are these portraits represented to my view.”

D'Arcos perceived the discomposure of his guest, and lamented both the cause, and his forgetfulness to have removed the pictures previous to their conference. He had preserved them thus, in his private closet, in sweet remembrance of the once happy beings they so exactly represented. The good knight, however, did not give the Lord Rodolph much time
for

for reflection, but being seated, he related the whole history of—the continual knockings—such hammerings, as though all the masons in Naples were at work within the Castle.—Such frightful warnings and lamentations.—The chapel tapers extinguished at one moment, and then illumined on the next, and heaven only knows by whom.—The black banners hoisted on one night, at top of one tower, and on the next fixed upon another.—The ringing of bells, with the distant and feeble voice, that invisibly exclaimed—“ Haste—begone—intrude not yourselves no longer in a place that belongs to virtue, sorrow, and devotion! —For here none but the noble and true possessor shall ever find repose.”——In short, the Chevalier disclosed the whole of what Francoliffe had related before

(though in language more refined, and void of all superstitious commentaries) concerning his tale of the Castle.

Rodolph listened with as much credit and attention to the Chevalier's strange history, as Drofi had done before to that of Francolisse's. His stubborn spirit, like the other's, was not to be awed or subdued by tales of ghosts, spirits, and supernatural agencies.—No, he was determined to push boldly forward, resolved not only to take immediate possession of his domains, but firmly to defend them, against all those who presumed to challenge his right of tenure.

Notwithstanding, however, that the Chevalier's discourse on this subject was more delicate and refined than that of Francolisse, still the commentator, Carlo, was wanting.—Had he been present at
this

this conference, and observed first (with the learned signiora Lauria, as he called her)—That if there has been any *murder* committed at the Castle, in that case, the ringing of bells will keep the spirits away, &c. and then (as Carlo himself had afterwards observed, with such critical discrimination)—is it not very probable, that some person in this old Castle has been murdered at one time or another?—and so on. These nice distinctions, proceeding from the very learned quarter they did, might probably have fastened themselves on Rodolph.—But whether through guilt, conviction, or what not, time can only ascertain.

The Count's reflections, however, on this mysterious tale, differed widely from those of our sagacious commentators. That the ringing of bells, at such and

such particular hours—the sounds of a distant and feeble voice, and other apparent strange events, might be easily accounted for, and as easily discovered.

In the first place, he had all along suspected the treachery of Goddard and Bernardine. He now conceived that they had, by some clandestine means, obtained a footing in the Castle; but how, he could not possibly account for?

In the second place—Rodolph reduced it to a certainty in his own mind, that they were the secret inhabitants of the fortress, and had been the joint authors of all these mysterious transactions, in order to alarm others from fixing their abode therein, and thereby to secure Prince Rinaldo's immense wealth, which he was certain they had embezzled for their own uses and designs.—And, lastly,

That

That they had discovered some secret channel that led to the North-tower, by which they contrived to ring the bell undiscovered.—That they had, also, found some unknown passage that led into the chapel, by which they managed to re-illumine the tapers, whenever extinguished.—In short—Rodolph had no doubt, within himself, but that these fellows were inclosed in some secret or subterraneous part of the Castle, as he put all supernatural agency entirely out of the question. Bernardine and Goddard, he knew, were possessed of natural courage and fortitude, and would retain their hold as long as they possibly could. He placed great hopes, however, on their extreme ignorance, which rendered them incapable of long carrying on a mysterious plot like this (that required a spirit

F 4

more

more subtle and ingenious than their's) with much farther success.—They possessed, indeed, some little cunning, but of that low nature, as is continually betraying itself, and running into the very same trap that it had laid for others.—To conclude, Rodolph already began to see those rebels in chains before him, and the prodigious stores of Prince Rinaldo disclosed to his eager view.

The Countess, on the other hand, was as much consoled with the cherishing idea that Santa-Maria must be still in existence.—One reflexion, however, would forcibly strike her,—that if her daughter was indeed alive, why had she not sent her some tidings of her being so? Again, she contemplated, with rapture, that the gift she had bestowed on the much to be regretted Laura, was an intended

tended token of her existence.—Given to her with the probability that it might, by some means, come across her observation; or—why have reserved this relic of her affection so long, and then dispose of it, at the critical juncture of her arrival?—It must be so (conceived the Lady Isabella) and though I deeply feel the affliction that her absence must afford hereafter Signiora Lauria, still I cannot refrain from indulging the fond idea of once more seeing my dearly beloved child again.

As for D'Arcos, he had been invited to attend Rodolph to his Castle.—This offer he now positively declined, fixed on sharing the sorrows of his beloved niece.—To his great grief, however, he soon began to perceive, that the sorrows of Lauria did not burst forth in torrents of distraction,

distraction, but that a settled melancholy had taken possession of her heart.—From sun-rise to sun-set, did the anxious Francoise search after the fugitive minstrel, but all in vain.—The Chevalier sought every means to soothe this melancholy of Lauria, but in vain also.—On perceiving this, he afterwards sought to indulge it, and would fondly attend his niece to the spot where she first discovered Valentine; for grief often finds more consolation by others participating in her woes, than fruitless exhortations to expel the canker that swells her convulsive bosom.

The more thou damm'st it up, the more it burns.
The current, that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopt, impatiently doth rage.

SHAKSPEARE.

Lauria,

Lauria, indeed, would frequently observe, when her swollen eye caught a momentary glance of Hope ‘the lover’s staff,’—“ Oh ! who can divine, thou best of men, and best of fathers, but my Valentine’s past affection may, by chance, induce him to stray once more towards the spot where he first beheld thy most hapless child ?”

CHAP. VIII.

Lonely, sad along the heath he slowly moved with
 silent steps—his arms hang disordered on his side—
 his hair flies loose—The tear is in his downcast
 eyes, and the sigh half silent in his breast.

OSSIAN.

Thou see'st we are not all alone unhappy :

This wide and universal theatre

Presents more woeful pageants, than the scene

Wherein we play.

SHAKSPEARE.

NOW to proceed with Santa-Maria,
 in a long journey of fresh fortunes—re-
 luctantly, indeed, have we been obliged,
 ever and anon, to hurry on, and leave her
 lagging behind, though still, our eyes,
 with pleasure, have been reverted, to gaze
 upon the struggling—hapless traveller.—

The

The minstrel, Valentine (for such was the new-adopted name that he now gave himself—*himself* we say, still keeping the disguise, and not the sex, in view)—after the interview he had obtained with Lauria, provided himself with his lute, and some food, and then precipitately deserted from the hospitable mansion of the Chevalier D'Arcos.

Uncertain, however, which road to pursue, and ignorant whither they led to, he wandered through the adjacent heaths and forests, and when night came on, laid himself down, beneath the sheltering branches of a wide-spreading oak.—Here Valentine enjoyed his repose undisturbed.—In the morning he continued his journey onward, and, towards the close of noon, perceived a deep valley, into which he immediately descended—

for,

for, here, no doubt (bethought the poor fugitive) I can refresh myself without being seen or annoyed—But, alas! his cup of misery was not yet filled; for, scarce had he seated himself upon the grass, when his ears were assailed with a long and mournful groan, that could not, from its original faintness, issue from any great distance.—The youth started up, and, clasping his forehead between his hands, he bitterly exclaimed—“ Oh! God, when, and where will my misfortunes have an end?”—His heart, however, touched by the voice of distress, made him search about to discover from whence the sound had found its melancholy way.—He followed it close as his ear could direct, which soon led him to the mouth of a small cave, apparently formed by art, at the bottom of a steep hill—

—With trembling steps, Valentine entered the gloomy abode—he had not far to proceed, for he soon discovered a wan and withered object stretched upon the cold ground.—For some time he stood enrapt in silent agony.—The expiring wretch, however, perceiving a stranger enter—again faintly exclaimed—“ Alas! I die for want of food.”—The minstrel, on hearing this, ran back for his basket of provision, which, in his dismay, he had left behind, together with his lute. He soon brought them both into the cave, and then administered to the poor recluse, every nourishment that his meat and wine could afford.—This seasonable relief shortly relieved the gasping—*miserable wretch*; and, with the assistance of Valentine, he raised himself from his prostrate situation.

In

In the mean time, the minstrel had an opportunity of inspecting this strange recess, and its banished—wretched inhabitant.—At the further end of the cave, he discovered a broad and smooth plank of wood, raised upon four large stones, about three feet from the ground. In the centre, the earth had been shaped into a kind of dome, and strengthened by square pieces of rock, in the middle of which, hung an iron lamp. Near the plank, were a stool and table, covered with a coarse, black cloth; and, close at hand, were some books, and several loose papers, together with a standish and pens, scattered upon an adjacent shelf.—As for the expiring wretch before him, he did not appear to be more than fifty, notwithstanding that disease and despair had made the most woeful ravages on
his

his miserable carcase.—His face bore the decayed signs of a once manly beauty, and his eyes had still something commanding in their glimmering shootings, whilst his outward garb carried with it the habit of a—*Monk*.

This deserted being, perceiving the natural astonishment of his benevolent visitor, with visible anguish, exclaimed—

“Alas! my young friend, had it not been for your timely aid, I should have left this world without any other expectation, but future—endless misery.—Oppressed with despair and sickness, I have for a long—long week been stretched upon my pallet, without being able to seek my daily nourishment. Overcome, at last, by the cravings of nature, I attempted to go in search of food, when, in the feeble attempt, I fell upon the ground, where my

groans

groans must have reached your ears, and happily brought you to my assistance."

The minstrel, sensibly moved with the extreme wretchedness of this unhappy man, caught hold of his arm, and led him to the stool.—Then seeing his eyes flow with tears of gratitude; and perceiving that he was about attempting to express his acknowledgments—he hastily observed—"Peace, peace—have a little patience and comfort—do not despair—I will remain here in the valley, for a short time, till, by my slender assistance, I may restore you to health, and to the world, I hope, also.—I have only this one favour, in return, to ask—and this must be regarded—(continued Valentine, in a tone of the utmost solemnity) in the strictest and most religious sense—*Question me not about the story of my*
life."—

life."—On this, the minstrel seated himself on the edge of the pallet, and leaning his arms upon his knees, gave vent to the anguish which these last words had revived, in a flood of tears.

Valentine (as it has been just observed) when he first attentively surveyed the stranger, guessed him, by his habit, to have been a monk.—Conscious, therefore, of the arbitrary sway that most of these orders assumed over the consciences of their fellow-creatures, and ever mindful of his oath at Bianca's cottage, "never to make known his sex, till time had unravelled the mystery that had first banished him from his native home and friends"—he had taken the above early precaution, to forewarn the wretched recluse from attempting to pry into the secrets of his soul.

Father

Father Conrad (for a monk he really had been, and such was he named) perceiving the minstrel so disconsolate, so young, and so beautiful withal, seated himself beside him on the pallet, and taking him tenderly by the hand, he now became the physician instead of the patient, and endeavoured to calm the anguish of his preserver's mind, in expressions so endearing, and so attempered with philosophy and religion, that Valentine, struck with his superior sense, piety, and engaging conversation, roused himself from the lethargy of despair and lamentation that had so suddenly overwhelmed him.

The Monk, discovering, with secret joy, that his exhortations had their desired effect, he arose (considerably strengthened) from his pallet, and still continuing the Minstrel's hand in his, he conducted him

to

to a door that led to an inner apartment, fitted out in a manner that still farther added to the surprise of Valentine. Our poor wanderer, who had no other roof to shelter his unprotected head, looked round him in silent meditation. He reviewed both the stranger and the place, over and over again, with the most deliberate circumspection. From the Monk, he conceived no violence or cruel treatment could be expected ; and, as to the recess, from its conveniency and secrecy, he began seriously to think, that it might afford him a temporary and secure abode.

Father Conrad, reading his young friend's thoughts in his countenance (for well could he scan the mind of man) and eager to give the earliest demonstration of his gratitude, he immediately offered Va-

lentine

Valentine the apartment which he seemed to survey with so much attention and satisfaction, as a comfortable asylum for him, till time should alter the complexion of his fortunes. “ Regard this chamber, therefore, my generous preserver (continued the Monk, seeing that Valentine’s looks spoke a thankful acquiescence) as the resting place of your present toils and misfortunes. No intruder can molest you here—and even myself shall not attempt to disturb your privacy, without a passport previously given from under your own lips. What you have already commanded respecting the story of your life, shall not only be rigidly adhered to on my part, but any other injunctions also, that you may hereafter think prudent to lay upon me.—In the mean time, I must beseech you (for debility and sickness prevent

vented me from accomplishing my daily wonted task, and which reduced me to the abject state you found me in) to go into the meadow, that lies on the east side of this recess, and there you will soon perceive a net, where, no doubt, some birds have been entangled. A practice I have long made use of to supply me with my daily sustenance. The Minstrel, immediately consented to go, and sprung out with a sudden flow of cheerfulness, as gave him a kind of flattering presentment, that in his chance friend and abode he should find that content and peace of mind, to which he had been almost a stranger for these four years past.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Ne is there hawk, which mantleth her on perch,
 Whether high trowing or accountig low :
 But I the measure of his flight do search,
 And all her prey, and all her diet know.

SPENCER.

————— in his forehead sits
 A bare ribb'd death.

SHAKSPEARE.

VALENTINE had not proceeded far, before he observed the net. It was about twelve yards and a half long, and two yards or so wide. He for some time surveyed the ingenuity of this piece of workmanship with pleasure and surprise. " This stranger (conceived he) must be
 a man

a man of great genius and wisdom—I should now wish to hear the story of his misfortunes; but as I have enjoined so rigid a silence myself on that subject, I cannot think of asking him. Let me, however, consider myself for the present, so far fortunate as to have met with an abode where secrecy precludes curiosity, and where love can no longer intrude itself on indifference.”

On this reflection, which cheered and encouraged his heart, Valentine proceeded to examine the net. He found therein several birds, some dead, others alive. The flur-birds were all dead, with their braces curiously turned round their bodies. The long string, however, being fastened tightly to a tree, had entrapped the others by the violence of their jerks. Our young Falconer, perceiving the flur-

birds to have been larks and pippets, expected that those inclosed in the net were of the same kind. In this, he was not disappointed, for they were nearly all larks, though but few pippets. What most of all, however, afforded him the greatest pleasure was the sight of a hawk, which, in attempting (as he supposed) to devour the larks, had been also entangled in the snare. On this discovery, he seized the bird by his wings, and fastened them underneath, with a kerchief that he had in his doublet, and which happily on that occasion, answered every purpose of a brace.

Whilst Valentine had gone in search of his game, Father Conrad, who found himself considerably relieved by the provisions he had been assisted to by his young tenant, kindled a fire in his new apartment,

ment, not at all doubting but that he would return with abundance of birds.

In this he was not disappointed, for our Falconer, with the utmost cheerfulness pictured on his blooming countenance, entered soon after with his prey. Valentine placed them all on the table, and exhibiting his hawk, with a smile of the most sensible satisfaction, exclaimed—

“Now, father, you shall no longer be in request of food, whilst I have this hawk in my possession, with powers and health also to manage him. Instead of larks, and other small birds, we will now shortly procure a sufficiency of wild fowl to soften and indulge the cravings of nature.

If the Monk was pleased at this expressive cheerfulness of his young inmate, he was also equally overjoyed with the valuable acquisition of his new friend. At

the thoughts of his recreative companion, Valentine, for the present, not only forgot all his past sorrows and misfortunes, but those also that the abandoned Lauria must experience at these very moments for his cruel and mysterious absence. Without taking farther notice, however, of any other immediate subject but his hawk, he laid hold of a leathern thong that lay upon the table (part of the Monk's paraphernalia of his order) and taking a knife from his doublet, cut a lease for his favourite bird. He then formed the jesses to his legs, and also cutting a thin stripe of leather, he fastened it to the lease, which formed his disciplinary creance. Our Falconer having proceeded thus far (to the surprize and pleasure of Father Conrad) he begged to have a part of the coarse black cloth that served as a covering to

his

his stool; which being cheerfully assented to, he immediately brought it forth, and straight cut a ruffer-hood for his hawk.— He then cut another thin stripe from the leathern thong, and shaped the string to unstrike the hood. Valentine, on this, discovering the bird begin to bate, observed, “ that it might now go to jouk, for I cannot (said he) in tenderness’ sake, seal the poor creature.”

Our eager sportsman having disposed of the hawk in one corner of his own apartment, sat down with great cheerfulness to supper, whilst the Monk, equally gratified by the good humour and good sense of his companion, experienced a renovating pleasure swell throughout his whole frame as he had not felt for some time before. To their game was added a flagon of fresh wine, which the Father

had brought from a closet in the next room. Their repast being concluded, Conrad began to interrogate Valentine respecting his first knowledge of falconry ; when the latter immediately silenced his curiosity, by reminding the other of the solemn injunctions he had laid on this subject at their first interview. He, however, took this opportunity of delicately hinting, that no such particular stress had been lain upon himself.

“ In conformity, my amiable inmate (replied the Monk) to this your first sacred request, my lips hereafter shall never be opened to trespass again. A mutual confidence might be as distressing to you, as it would be *horribly* so to me. Indeed, youth, if I was inclined to tell the sad story that first brought me to this place, my consumptive powers would not suffer
me

me to do so, without hastening the dissolution which I feel creeping through my chilly veins. It is already inscribed on the fable book of fate for the view and example of posterity ; if chance suffers it to burst forth like a pestilence upon the world—no more, however, of this—I have said enough. As I perceive, nevertheless (continued the Father) that your curiosity has been excited about this solitary recess, I can with propriety, and far more satisfaction, give you a brief sketch of its present modelled appearance. A trifling sketch, indeed—but one that will en-
 lesson the industry and skill of degenerate man, when drove to the extreme bounds of necessity and despair.

CHAP. X.

Oh! I have done those things

That now give evidence against my soul.

SHAKESPEARE.

IT is now above three years (said Father Conrad) since I first came to this solitary vale—a villain in my own mind, and an outcast of mankind.”——Perceiving Valentine change countenance, at this unfavourable confession—the Monk paused a few moments, and then recollecting himself, thus proceeded:—

“Hither then, suffice it to say, I strayed, and descending into this recluse glen, discovered a shelter, which I have every

reason

reason to believe, had been formerly the abode of wolves, as I found several bones of some such animals scattered about the ground.—Fearful lest any more should return, I continually kept up a large fire, and in a few days afterwards, observing that the earth was of a clayey substance, and that the heat had considerably hardened it, I instantly formed the idea of making this secret spot the future place of my retirement.

The more completely to effect my purpose, I left it for a few days, and repairing to the village of St. Biagio, which lies southward of the glen; I purchased the implements and conveniencies necessary for my undertaking. On my return, I began by unwearied application to accomplish the design, and found every thing agree with my utmost wishes. Af-

ter some weeks of incessant labour, I at length completed the outer room as it now stands.—The adjacent forests furnishing plenty of wood, I had every means also of making the tables, stools, and other necessaries, that the recess is at present so comfortably provided with. After concluding my first attempt, I found my mind and body grow relaxed, for want of that usual employ and exercise which had for some time so happily relieved me from the anxiety of reflection.—Thinking on this same occasion, that some unfortunate stranger, or bewildered traveller, might one day stray towards my recess; I soon after began to found the apartment you now are to possess. Having learnt a great deal from my former experience, I improved upon my former plan, and rendered this chamber

ber more compact and regular than the other. The successive works of labour were not completed, till a year and more after my first sojourning on this spot. Having thus inured my body by industry, I then resolved to set me down in rest, and strengthen my mind for a future state.—In short, since that, I have arranged every worldly concern (save one) and endeavoured by fasting, prayer, and repentance, to prepare my soul for a favourable reception in the other world—a world, awful indeed for me to think upon, and which I should have entered before now, whither forgiven or condemned, had it not been for your unexpected and charitable assistance.”

Father Conrad, perceiving the night steal on apace, rose, and prepared to bid Valentine a good repose.—But on a sud-

den, a start of recollection, delayed him a few moments longer.—He now re-approached our minstrel, and thus addressed him in the most solemn and most energetic manner, both of countenance and voice :

“ Before I depart, allow me to lay this inhibition on you—You have already enjoined me, my most amiable youth, not to interrogate you concerning the history of your life.—Let me, therefore, enjoin *you*, during your abode in this inner recess—never—never, to draw aside—those black hangings you may see there, at the eastern part of the chamber. Your curiosity would then prove as hurtful to your feelings, as it has always been to me, when I have dared to gratify my own.—I am not long for this world—a few—very few days indeed,

deed, will cut the thread of existence.—
 I feel that this last shock will soon crum-
 ble me into my native dust.—My vital
 powers are almost exhausted.—I pray
 therefore, that you may remain here, un-
 til the expected awful period has
 taken place.—Then, and then only, you
 have my free grant to withdraw these
 fable hangings.—And then, oh! youth,
 you will discover a treasure, that may
 hereafter (together with the invaluable
 jewel of an untainted conscience) render
 you superior to the taunts of prospe-
 rity, and the gloomy scorns of adversity.
 —Youth, good-night—have present re-
 solution to repel curiosity, and all still
 may be happy with you.” On this the
 Father retired to his own hard pallet,
 and left his inmate to enjoy the comforts
 of a soft and pleasant mattress.

The monk being gone, Valentine still kept his seat before the fire, to indulge a few moments' reflection on one day's more adventures. His ideas soon began to float about in varied channels.—He looked toward the black hangings, and wondered deeply what they could conceal.—They appeared *both* of a coarse substance, similar to the habit the recluse himself had on.—He ruminated on the expressions that prefaced his story of the recess.—A villain in my own mind, and an outcast of human nature.—Surely (conceived Valentine) I can have nothing to apprehend?—His manners, sense, ingenuity, and complacency of countenance, do not convey the appearance of danger in them;—his humanity, moreover, and benevolent foresight, in providing this secret and convenient shelter

ter for the *unhappy stranger* or *bewildered traveller*, denote a charitable beneficence of mind, that could not harbour danger also;—I see no instruments of lurking mischief any where about.—What, however, can the mystery attached to those coarse fable hangings disclose?—A treasure (says the father)—his meaning cannot surely be othewise fairly construed into any other words, than what he himself expressed.—But if it is a treasure, why then give it such a melancholy and forbidding shelter?—Is it not, however, prudent, and conducive for my safety, to break through this monks behest's, and will not my present precarious situation excuse my curiosity?—But then again will not this same breach of faith, betray a meanness, and an abuse also of his confidence and hospitality?—most certainly

it will. Then I will also repress my anxieties, and not attempt to violate the solemn injunctions he has laid upon me."

Valentine thus resolved, and seeing his lute at hand, which the monk had carefully placed there, he took it up, and accompanying the instrument with his voice, chaunted in doleful strains, the unhappy loves of the fair Rosaline, and the beauteous Lauria.

The solemnity of the hour, and the expressive melancholy of the lute, had such an effect upon the poor Father, in the adjoining chamber, that Valentine heard him distinctly exclaim—"Such are the sounds that suit 'the gloomy horrors of my soul.'"

The minstrel on discovering this, immediately ceased playing, and putting down his lute in the same corner of the recess,

where

where he had perched his hawk, he lay down upon his mattress; when

—“ Sleep that sometimes shuts up sorrow’s eye,”
soon overpowered, and locked him in the arms of sweet oblivion.

CHAP. XI.

-----Tremble, thou wretch,
 That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
 Unwhipt of justice. — Hide thee, thou bloody hand,
 Thou perjure, and thou simular of virtue;
 That art *incestuous*; caitiff, shake to pieces.

SHAKESPEARE.

VALENTINE rose with the sun, and looking after his hawk, gave him a lark-gorge, and setting out to the meadow that was the least encumbered with trees or wood, commenced his first morning's training. The minstrel was a most excellent falconer, he therefore set about manning and reclaiming his bird, in the peculiar manner he had been taught by the

the love-sick Rosaline's father. His practices and observances had soon their desired effect. The hawk every morning, became more than extraordinarily early attached to his young tutor; and Valentine finding him to be a stately high-flyer, brought him up to the river. —A manner of training that not only suited best to the situation of the country but to the short periods of the morning, that he could stray from the glen, and prudently appropriate to his favourite recreation.

The game, however, that Valentine acquired through the activity of his bird, had no other effect on father Conrad, than what arose from gratitude.—He had found himself decaying day after day, from the minstrel's first arrival. The melody, indeed, of his lute, which he
never

never failed to indulge him with, cheered his drooping spirits, and elevated his meditations, with encreased awe, to approaching scenes of an awful eternity. Nature at length, after a month's severe struggle—wearied and decayed—the monk gave up the ghost.—And Valentine found himself alone, in a dreary recess, which nothing but a second being could enliven—associated also with a miserable corpse;—interested likewise in a secret, which his honour and faith, at first denied him to seek into, and which his fears now dissuaded him from attempting to discover—a secret, that had been particularly enjoined by the monk, in his last moments, immediately, to satisfy himself with; as on that, and that alone, his own future happiness and prosperity depended.

Great

Great were the struggles of Valentine's mind on this mournful occasion. He wished, indeed, that both his own innocent curiosity, and the last dying bequests of Father Conrad should be satisfied and performed. On the eve, therefore, of his decease, the solitary exile took the lamp from the dead man's room; and with all the resolution he could collect, entered the inner recess; for, in the other, he could not abide the passing of a second. Several times was Valentine determined to fly from the spot, and abandon the secret to some future stranger. Then, on the other hand, to disobey the last solemn prayers of a poor departed being, compelled him to resist the uncharitable idea.—Thus wavering, he tremblingly approached the hanging nearest the door. He hesitated, and shook with horror—At last, he ventured

to

to draw it one side, and discovered—
~~gave~~ a coffin, standing upright, covered with the same coarse black stuff that composed the hanging under which it lay concealed. For four years (as it has already appeared) Valentine had been nursed in the lap of misery and sorrow. This was a spectacle, therefore, that did not so much disturb his fortitude. It was a mere and necessary apparatus of death; and, as such, he soon reconciled the sight of it to his feelings. On the lining was fastened a paper. This, however, he was determined at all events not to remove, without searching for some witness. He was also resolved not to draw aside the other hanging, which ran parallel with the first; for the words, "I am a villain in my own mind, and the outcast of human nature," came fresh across his memory.—Behind

hind the other, as he conceived, might remain—not a coffin—but some mouldering—murdered corpse. This supposition he was led into by an offensive smell that had often issued from that quarter, as he passed by it.—Possessed, therefore, of sufficient fortitude, to abandon the recess, he took his lute, and hastily quitting the dreary abode of death, flew to the side of an adjacent hill, that he knew led towards the great road to Messina; not with the intent, however, of wholly abandoning the recess, but to endeavour by his melody, to attract some wandering stranger, or chance traveller, who not only could be a joint testimony of this mysterious history, but who could, with more resolution, perform those ceremonies to the dead, which he knew himself incapable of going singly through.

Here

Here Valentine acted equally with great prudence and circumspection ; for he well knew that if the severe and scrutinizing eye of the Neapolitan law should ever by chance, or what not, gain an insight into this dark business, that a court of inquisition might arraign his conduct, and himself be ultimately persecuted for what he was innocent of—being resolutely determined (as he was) even if death should be the consequence, never to violate the solemn oath he had made at Bianca's cottage,—viz.—to reveal the secret of his sex or birth, till the mystery of the pregnancy should be elucidated—
And

“ His words were bonds, his oaths were oracles,”

C H A P.

CHAP. XII.

How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank!
 Here will we sit, and let the sound of music
 Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
 Become the touches of sweet harmony.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT wanted two hours to midnight, when Valentine ventured from the recess. The moon shone in all her splendour. Her silver rays, that darted through the spreading oak and the tall pine, afforded a strong ray of light on that side of the hill which the minstrel thought best situated for his purpose. Having seated himself on its sloping banks, and attuned his lute to the soft vibrating chords of melan-

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choly,

choly, he began to play the dirge sung at the funeral of Lucy Mirando, the proud beauty of the celebrated Fano.

Valentine had scarcely finished this solemn piece of music, when, assisted by the sweet echo that reverberated through the glen, he thought that some persons were speaking over his head. He stopped and listened, with all the agitation that his present forlorn and distressed situation could possibly give birth to—he arose and listened again. Shortly, his ears were happily saluted from above, with the most welcome sounds; sounds that denoted command, and something of a superior quality. “I will dismount (said the same voice again) for sure some angel or fairy must inhabit this vale. Do you all, therefore remain above, until I reascend.”

When Valentine, however, distinguish-
ed

ed the words—" Do you all remain above," his fears began to tax his discretion. His situation, nevertheless, was too distressing then to admit of fancied apprehensions, when such real and horrible ones withal were so near at hand. Being, therefore, asked from above, whence such celestial sounds proceeded? our minstrel played them over again, in order that the stranger might pursue the notes by his ear. This had the desired effect. Valentine plainly distinguished the approaching footstep. He looked toward the place from whence it reverberated, and could plainly perceive by the bright rays of the moon, a Cavalier approach, arrayed in a suit of fables. He had no time for farther contemplation, as the stranger now stood close beside him. Discovering the minstrel to be considerably depressed with

4 fear, the Cavalier soon relieved his anxiety ; and addressing him in the most courteous manner, enquired the subject of those mournful strains, which had so forcibly struck him, as he was slowly riding by the glen?

“ When I first distinguished the plaintive sounds (continued the stranger) of your dulcive lute, it brought back to my recollection such notes that I have often listened with rapture to before. In days, alas ! far more tranquil, and happier than the present.—Methought also the voice had been once familiar to my ear.—But say, youth—from what cause proceed these melancholy sounds, that denote so strongly, all is not well within?—Or, are you some en-skied being, dropped from the heavens, to teach us the harmony of
the

the spheres? or, if you are mortal——
 (which by your looks I scarce believe you
 are) what makes your residence here in
 this solitary glen? Say—is some favourite
 fair one kept captive hereabout—the un-
 willing sacrifice of age or lechery? Has
 treachery been at work to empoison the
 soul of innocence and beauty? Does any
 hapless virgin groan under the manacles
 of a brutal father's rage, for giving vows
 of love, where he would wish to crush
 them?——Has some false friend taken re-
 fuge in this solitude, to avoid the dashing
 glance and honest face he once has injur-
 ed, and now he could not dare to look
 upon?—Or (oh! answer me)——Have
 you a mother—here—performing penance
 for violating of her marriage faith; or a
 sister—youth—for breaking of her virgin-

knot, before the sacred laws of holy church allowed it?"

At this, the Cavalier, perceiving that Valentine's hand (which he had clasped in his at the first, with the most soothing tendernefs) grow rather chilled, he encouraged him to be of good heart, and cheered him with instant promises of assistance, if he would confide in him so far as to acquaint him with the occasion of his distress and melancholy—" Had I not been so much moved as I was (continued the stranger) at the delicious effusions of your lute ; and now, at your modest, youthful, and beautiful countenance, it had been my duty as a *soldier* and a Christian, to afford you all the help my sword and counsel could bestow."—

Whilst the Cavalier was uttering this
last

last profession of his services, the moon darted full upon their side of the hill, and shone with uncommon splendour on both their faces. Valentine, with strong emotions of pre-sentimental curiosity, took this fair opportunity of surveying the stranger's countenance. He trembled, but knew not for why—his hand became chilled again, and a faintness crept over his whole frame-----for, now our minstrel conceited, that in the features of the Cavalier, he could recognize an ancient and beloved --- friend, one that he had known in happier days. ———Again and again did he survey the countenance with fresh attention.—Then his memory, he thought, belied him.—Alas!—he was deceived-----no—he was not that same friend his conceit had

fondly led him to suppose.—Still—remembrance shot with renovated vigour o'er his mind, and though the features that stood so conspicuously before him (pale, broken, and emaciated as they appeared to be) were not exactly those of him that his imagination had, at first, conceived—yet there was still something in the nature and complexion of them, that he faintly recollected, when erst, tranquillity had cheered his youthful heart.

Whilst Valentine was thus giving way to his silent and wandering conjectures, the Cavalier having enjoyed the same opportunity that the moon's broad phases had mutually afforded, gazed attentively also on the minstrel's countenance, and, after uttering a deep sigh—still retaining the

the youth's hand entwined in his—he poignantly exclaimed—

“ Oh! beauteous boy! how much does that lute—that voice—that face, remind me of — — —.”

“ Of who?”—quickly returned the minstrel.—

“ Of a—forgive me, boy—a w—— a wretch—One that I loved more tenderly than mine eye-balls—but at whose remembrance my blood now recoils.—Oh! my misery and perdition- - - - - but—I am wandering from the purpose that first led me hither.—Come, youth, then (continued the Cavalier, collecting himself in an instant) haste, and acquaint me with the cause of your distress (if there is any such existing) and I will quickly endeavour to set all things right, before I proceed on my journey.”

“ But oh ! Sir Cavalier, tell me first, who you can thus praise and curse at once—I, perchance, may soothe your anguish.”

“ You cannot, youth ; the disease is past all remedy—therefore, haste and tell, if it is in my power to soothe and assist *you*. My squire and followers attend me on the brow of this deep glen. I have business of *wondrous import*, that calls me hence, and that right speedily, withal.—If so silent, then (concluded the Cavalier, and rising to depart) I am gone—Youth, farewell, and happier times attend you !”

“ Delay here, then, but for a short while longer (exclaimed the distressed Valentine, in the most piteous accent, now calling to mind the mournful cause
that

that had banished him from the dreary
avenues of the recesses) have but a little
patience, noble Cavalier, and I will tell
you all—the story is brief, and the pur-
port of it can soon be related.

C H A P. XIII.

My life upon't, young tho' thou art, thine eye
 Hath staid some favour that it loves;
 Hath it not, boy?

SHAKSPEARE.

VALENTINE having prefaced his story, by observing—"That as he was a wandering and forlorn minstrel, who acquired a lodging and subsistence by his lute—Chance, after an unsuccessful day's excursion, had led him into that glen, to seek a night's repose."—He then precipitately journeyed through his tale, by closely following up the circumstances of his adventure with Father Conrad—the relief he had so fortunately afforded him—

him—his gratitude for the transitory preservation he had met with from his hands—his despair—his recent death—with the discovery of the coffin, and the scroll, behind the black arras—and, in short, all the other events that had taken place betwixt himself and the monk, from his first abode in the recess, to the Father's dissolution.

“ This (concluded Valentine) is my short tale ; and the reluctance I felt—(for oh ! Sir Cavalier, I have never been, like you, bred up to arms) to proceed farther in what still remains concealed, compelled me to seek the downy coat of this hill, that, by the persuasive force of my lute, I might, perhaps, attract some passing stranger, or chance traveller, to be a co-equal witness of what now continues unrevealed ; and also, to assist me
in

in performing those last ceremonies to the dead, which my too fearful heart could never be encouraged singly to go through. Fortunately, you were the first who descended, and the first, I am well convinced, who would aid me in my purpose. If willing, therefore, to relieve an hapless—poor—defenceless boy, attend me to this same recess, and then you shall learn farther.”

The stranger listened with silence and surprise to the minstrel's artless tale.—When it was concluded, however, he did not hesitate a moment, in assenting to comply with his request.—From what he had just heard, there was no doubt, but what guilt and anguish had long resided where he was proceeding to.—Mystery had been the peculiar province of his own life and fortunes—at first, dark and impenetrable.

impenetrable.—But as mysteries, toward
 the last conclusion of the eventful scene,
 of a foul and a blackened nature, seldom,
 or ever, fail of being dragged into the
 broad glare of day—so had it fell out,
 in part, with him—now the stirring actor
 of a most bloody tragedy.—One tragedy
 however, done, another might succeed.
 The enveloped scene of mystery, though
 vanished from his own person, might still
 hang hovering over other heads—aye, and
 over the heads, perhaps, of those who have
 commenced the act with him, but not con-
 cluded it so soon.—Like his own stirring
 part at first—perplexed—apparently un-
 fathomable—till chance, with uncertain
 flight, dropped on the theatre of life's
 extended action, and publishes to the
 world's ear what was once supposed to
 be

be locked up for ever in the womb of oblivion.

As Valentine was leading the courteous stranger towards his recess, he distinguished his followers, by the rays of the moon, on the brow of the hill.—On this, he drew his sword, and waved it loftily in the air, as a token that they should descend.

Our Minstrel, on discovering the naked sword of his warlike comrade, expressed an alarm, that was immediately perceived by the stranger. He, instantly, however, removed his apprehensions, by observing, that it was only a promised signal to his attendants: “For, previous to my descent, (said he) I ordered them particularly to watch the token, lest any unforeseen accident might happen.—But, youth (continued the Cavalier, with a smile of retort,

as they journeyed towards the recess) why so susceptible of fear? It does not become a man to be so daunted on every occasion—these apprehensions more become a woman's nature."

"Alas! Sir Knight (replied the Minstrel, with a deep sigh) I am no soldier."

"I warrant that (returned the stranger) no doubt, but what you have fed more on the smiles of yielding beauty, than you ever tasted the frowns of hostile danger. When I regard those expressive eyes—those animated features, and that prepossessing form, I cannot but credit you have possessed the heart of many a beauteous damsel. Women cannot well resist such qualities and temptations as you inherit. The delicious harmony of your voice, and the skilful dispositions of your lute, must have ensured you more conquests,

conquests than could a whole life devoted to war and danger.—A foldier's chieft—nobleft recompence—do you enjoy?"—

Valentine, on hearing this—reclined his head, and blufhed.—

“ What ! blufhing too withall?—Now believe me, moft gallants would be happy to recount—aye, and redouble the conquests you muft have obtained;—befides, your occupation fuits you for a lady's bed-chamber. There you can lull them into fondnefs—delight their enraptured fenses to the higheft zenith of irrefiftible defire, and enchant them to commit, fond, dying, mutual deeds of exquisite love and tendernefs.—The unguarded husband, the too credulous parent, and the unfufpecting brother, do not confider on the dangers their wives, their daughters, and their fifters experience,
when

when such handsome, modest-seeming, beardless youths as you, intrude upon their too pliable, susceptible natures.—No, perdition seize me if they do—(raising his voice here with uncommon warmth, and which betrayed that what he had hitherto uttered, arose more from spleen and satire, than any pleasure he could receive from the rehearsed ecstasies of love)—No—no—fame, honour, gratitude, and affection, are soon overwhelmed in the amorous dalliance of mutual love—I would have said—let me however change it—to mutual lust;—for love can never take a lasting residence, where honour does not abide also.”

“ That last expression, Sir Knight (observed Valentine) is virtuous, nobly spoken, and well becomes you.—The former part of your discourse, however, ill-suits
with

with the melancholy errand we are now upon."

"Come—come (replied the stranger, with an assumed tone of merriment) be not afraid of the consequences hanging on our errand.—Neither dead men, or coffins, or any mysterious scrolls, can disturb the mind, where guilt does not inhabit.—I am young like unto yourself;—fond also of attending to the tales of love.—Come then, and cheer me onward, with the histories of those who have shared your favours.—I have heard of many a dame, and damsel too, who have become the happiest sacrifices to a voice, a skill, and a person like your's; all as deliciously happy in your embrace, as you have been in their's."

Valentine, who from some experience, had become in a measure acquainted
with

with the duplicity and yielding nature of his sex (or, rather, more closely speaking, *her sex*) soon discerned, that the Cavalier's mirth, was not only assumed, but estranged from his real nature ; one expression alone, convinced him that his genuine thoughts on *real love*, were pure and noble. The flattery he had bestowed on his voice, skill, and person, appeared to him to be a well directed feint, to discover some mystery, which at present was impenetrable. Curiosity, therefore, and not inclination to converse on these tender, or rather lascivious topics, was his sole intent. Valentine, however, finding himself hardly pressed upon the subject, and knowing he had some farther way to proceed, before they reached the recess, thus pathetically replied to his amorous interrogatories :

“ Sir

“ Sir Knight (said the minstrel) if you will thus persist in learning the progress of my attributed conquests, and the real situation of my heart, so far shall you be acquainted.—For these some years, have I pursued the occupation of a minstrel; several noble houses have received me under their hospitable roofs, from the skill in music, you are pleased to say, that I inherit.—Several ladies too, and fair ones withal, have bestowed their dearest affections upon me. I might, indeed (had it so in my nature been) have enjoyed all the transports that mutual love could bestow. Two cogent reasons, however, forbade me to indulge an unwarrantable disposition.—First, Sir Cavalier, I would not for the treasures of the Indus, have so heinously violated the laws of hospitality, and wounded the peace

I

of

of my protector, as either to debauch his wife, child, or sister.—In the next place (excuse me for being so brief, as I perceive we are nearly approaching the recess—) I have a passion so deeply rooted in my heart for one person, and one person only, that neither beauty, superior as it may be, or affection ever so greater, can ever wean my imagination from him.”

“ From *him*, youth, did you say ?”

“ From *him*, Sir Knight—Alack-a-day! you do mistake—From *her*, I said.—Alas! what hold doth absence take upon the grief-worn mind.”

“ It is even thus—such also has it been with me.—But to continue (said the stranger) with our love histories.—Say then, youth—Did the fair one return your kindness ?”

“ She did—we loved, and were beloved

ed of all ; till the shafts of adversity and slander interfered between our mutual happiness, and marred all our future prospects of approaching bliss."

The stranger would have questioned farther, and more definitive explanations might *probably* have taken place, had they not been critically interrupted by the trampling and neighing of horses that followed behind. The Cavalier on distinguishing this, turned round, and thus familiarly addressing himself to the foremost.—“ In good faith, Sebastian, you have pursued us close.”

“ My Lord (replied the other) we soon perceived your signal, and distinguishing your voice, as you passed onward, we followed you at some humble distance. Aldobrand, also (pointing to a beautiful black charger, which he was leading

leading by the rein) recognized it also, and sensible of the sound, began neighing on the instant.—But I hope, my Lord, no particular accident has called us here?”

“None, Sebastian, of any serious import.—Nothing, indeed, that will long delay us from pursuing the remainder of our journey to the Castle.”

Valentine, had scarce time to contemplate the comely and martial appearance of Sebastian—the noble and stately animal, Aldobrand—or the words, my Lord,—and journey to the Castle, before they reached the mouth of the recess.

“This, my Lord (said the minstrel then, with a peculiar strong emphasis)—this is the spot, where Father Conrad lies a corpse, and where the mysteries I told you of remain concealed. On this the

noble unknown deputed the veteran
Launcelot (and father of Sebastian) to
watch carefully without, whilst his son
and himself should attend the young
stranger into the recess.

As Valentine was leading the way
through the narrow empow'ered avenue
that pointed to the recess, he stopped all
of a sudden—being overcome (as he said)
with a faintness that struck chilly to his
very soul. The stranger attributing his
fickleness to his fears, gently forced him to
recline on his arm: and then turning
round to his spine, he observed, "Ah!
CHAP. this tender-bottom—could has

CHAP. XIV.

Oh! when the last account 'twixt heav'n and earth
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
Witness against thee to damnation.

SHAKESPEARE.

AS Valentine was leading the way
through the narrow embowered avenue
that pointed to the recess, he stopped all
of a sudden—being overcome (as he said)
with a faintness that struck chilly to his
very soul. The stranger attributing his
sickness to his fears, gently forced him to
recline on his arm; and then turning
round to his 'squire, he observed, " Ah!
Sebastian, this tender-bosomed youth has

not been cased, like us, in the tough armour of danger and adversity! But, come—courage, boy (continued the Cavalier, addressing himself to Valentine) pluck up thy mettle for thy mistress' sake. She will not love thee else; nor pain herself to lull and nurse thee in the soft cradle of fond dalliance. He trembles, Sebastian. Assist him with your arm—Come, let us enter in abreast—Cheerly—Cheerly, youth, and be not thus depressed. Let not apprehension thus overpower you.”

They now entered into the chamber of death—Valentine turned away his head from the corpse—His companions, however, regarded it with an air of the utmost indifference—“This arched door (said the stranger) I suppose, youth, leads into the apartment you told me of?”

“The same, my Lord.”

They

They then entered the second recess—
Sebastian leading the way, as the passage
would not admit of three abreast.

“There also is the coffin, I see, that you
alluded to.” Then addressing himself to
Sebastian, the stranger observed with a
smile, “Something strikes me, my friend,
that we shall meet with *another adventure*
here.”

Whilst the utmost calmness and com-
posure reigned in the hearts of Sebastian
and his Lord, it was far otherwise with
the agitated Minstrel—A sickly faintness
still continued hanging over him, whilst
his throbbing heart beat to and fro, as
though it would burst from the precincts of
its corporeal prison—The violence of his
womanly apprehensions, however, sub-
sided, when he considered and regarded

the presence, coolness, and intrepidity, of his two companions.

The stranger having taken the scroll from the coffin, and first perusing it to himself, he afterward disclosed the contents, as thus, to Valentine and Sebastian:

“ Whenever chance may lead some

“ Christian step into this dreary re-

“ cefs of death, let these last wishes

“ of an unhappy sinner be complied

“ with: First, to deposit whatever

“ scattered remains that he may dis-

“ cover hereabout within the coffin

“ that stands concealed behind the

“ black hanging in the adjoining

“ chamber.—In the next place, this

“ first Christian act performed, let

“ him see the remains conveyed for

“ interment, to the great convent of

“ the

" the Carthusians, on St. Martin's
 " Hill, near the Castle of St. Elma—
 " For these labours, he will find a
 " noble recompence. Beneath the
 " adjoining hanging, also, lie conceal-
 " ed two small iron chests—one con-
 " tains—the aforesaid recompence—
 " the other holds a parchment scroll—
 " sacred to the eye of one alone. Let
 " it be delivered, therefore as the
 " outward covering directs—To a
 " strange and unconcerned inspect-
 " ing eye, it matters not ; though to
 " the right owner it will convey
 " most damnable truths.—And, ref-
 " cue—(Oh ! God forgive me) inno-
 " cence, honour, and beauty from
 " the shaft of obloquy and persecu-
 " tion. According, therefore (whoever
 " thou mayest be) as you act honour-
 " ably,

ably, and up to the tenor of this paper, so may your recompence prove a comfort and a blessing.

(Signed) "CONRAD.

[Late a Father of the convent of the Carthusians.]"

The stranger having thus far examined into the mysteries attached to the first hanging, they proceeded to the second coarse arras. This being drawn aside, they discovered two shelves. On the uppermost shelf were the two small iron chests, and on the nethermost were a skull and some transixed human bones —

"These remnants of our body's dissolution (said the Cavalier to Valentine) must have been the cause, no doubt, of the offensive smell that you mentioned on the Hill.

Hill. This same Father Conrad (continued he, addressing himself next to Sebastian) has been guilty, I foresee, of some damnable crime as this scroll I hold has already implied.—And———like those guilty wretches resembling unto himself that have been handed down from memory to memory:—wretches, who either expected for some blasted violations of their sacred laws and functions; or by the secret—still more horrible punctures of a stirring conscience, have been forced to fly from the soothing bonds of social intercourse, to the clandestine solitary haunts of woods and caves. And here it is that Hope sometimes faintly softens their despair with a wild, confused expectation—that by a severe abstinence—fastings—self-inflicted corporal punishments, and continual prayers, they offer up an atone-

ment to the blessed ministers above for crimes as black as is the Ethiop's skin—and though

“Unfit to live, or die”——

Still will they keep up this stale superstitious farce of mortification—Still will they preserve our mortal relics to gape—to stare upon, and to pray to withal, though these same musty bones must bitterly remind them of that awful self-dissolution which they are themselves so unprepared to meet, and which, if once re-animated, might publish to the world such confessional horrid truths, as would make the hair even of murder, blasphemy, and incest, stand an end.—”

The stranger now drew forth the iron chests;—they were, however, both locked—But, Valentine soon removed the ob-

stacle

stake that presented itself on opening the
 same, by pointing out another paper to
 his companions, which he perceived had
 been fixed between the two cross bones.
 —On this fresh discovery, the Cavalier,
 immediately opened the paper, and as he
 had done before with the first—read it si-
 lently to himself.—Having fully examined
 its contents, he turned round with a smile
 of joy and uncommon satisfaction. Then
 shaking Valentine heartily by the hand,
 he exultingly congratulated him on his
 approaching good fortune——“ I wish
 thee, merry, my boy (said he) with all
 this wealth—The Monk, in good faith,
 has, however, performed one good and
 generous deed—whatever his darker ones
 may prove to have been.—Thy lute,
 youth, shall henceforward sound cheerily;
 no mournful dirges now, but sprightly

ditties. I will have love-sonnets now, and amorous ones withal;—such as will give fresh vigour to old threescore and more.— And when inclined to martial strains, thou shalt give me the song of war.”

Upon this, the stranger, in the liveliest effusions of joy and congratulation, arising solely from the pure, though sudden friendship he began to feel for the Minister, thus read aloud the contents of this second scroll:

“The keys that can only open these
“two chests are pending within the
“coffin. To whatever stranger’s
“fortune it may arrive to open the
“same, his gratitude also will in-
“duce him to comply speedily with
“every particular of my last dying
“wishes.”—

After

After having read thus far, the stranger ordered Sebastian to open the lid, and obtain these same keys.

He then continued the scroll:

"The silver key opens the chest that

"contains my treasures. The iron

"one also opens the second, that

"contains the mysterious manu-

"script."

To this was annexed the following codicil, which appeared to have been recently added to the letter:

"This my treasure consists of ten thou-

"sand crowns.—The whole amount

"of which I solemnly bequeath to

"the Minstrel Valentine, on whose

"dear charity—sweet humanity, and

"celestial

"celestial benevolence, I also com-
mit the disposal of my departed
body.—Jesus Christ once more
have mercy on my poor troubled
soul.

(Signed) "CONRAD."

Marry, my well-favoured boy (now ob-
served the stranger) what think ye of this
sudden and happy change of fortune?

"Indeed, I think, my good Lord (re-
plied Valentine) that this unexpected
treasure may much more worthily, and
with my free consent, be rested in your
possession than in mine.—You, I am well
assured, have ability to preserve or dis-
pose of it, as hereafter circumstances
may think fit."

If the stranger had been before so in-
terested by the manners, discourse, and
beauty,

beauty, of the minstrel, he now became more so, from this last instance of candour and generosity. "My noble spirit (said he, with an emphatic ardor, that was akin to paternal love) I perceive you now merit this* unexpected boon of good-fortune, even if it was ten times more than its present value.—It is such as you who deserve her favours most; for by despising them, your heart is alone susceptible of sharing them with the unfortunate and forlorn.—But come, we will talk more of this anon.—Sebastian, give me those keys."

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

But that I am forbid—

I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word

Would harrow up thy soul.

—Were't my fitness

To let these hands obey my boiling blood,

They're apt enough to dislocate and tear

His flesh and bones.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE keys being presented to the stranger, he first took the silver one, and opened the nearer chest; it was full to the very top, and seemed to contain the whole treasure that had been particularly described in the Father's codicil.—

“And now (observed the Cavalier) we will

will proceed to open the other chest, which is supposed to contain such damnable truths.—But first, youth, suffer me to possess you with this your indefeasible right, of which myself and Sebastian are sufficient testimonials, and which we will protect you in, to the extremity of our lives and fortunes.”

On this, he proceeded to open the chest with the iron key, and strait-forth took out a cumbrous parchment roll;—casting his eye on the superscription, he started some paces backward.—Then after a pause, that denoted great agony and astonishment, he precipitately broke open the large seal, with which it was fastened. Valentine instantly perceiving his purpose, exclaimed with uncommon spirit and resolution—“ My Lord—my Lord, proceed no farther—reflect, you
are

are about to transgress the last wishes of a dying man."

"Peace, boy—if aught you value my future friendship and protection.—This parchment concerns me equally with the person to whom it is addressed.—Disturb me not, for I'll go through with it, though each word should prove a basilisk to mine eye." Upon this determination, he began to unfold the parchment, and to look upon its damnable contents.

The onset of this fatal scroll had been scarce surveyed by the noble incognito, when he began to throw his cloak backwards over his shoulders, and his hat, with its sable plumage, was also removed from his head to the earth, whilst big drops of sweat distilled themselves in torrents from his agonized face. Valentine, at this distressing and sudden change,

change, was agitated beyond conception. He regarded the manly, though palid countenance of the stranger, with a rising emotion of tenderness and susceptibility, that he had not felt for him half so powerfully, as at this present critical juncture. The more he reviewed his features, his person, his manner, the more he was perplexed and uncertain. Both his strength of mind and body, however, began to forsake him, and Valentine, overcome with a sickly faintness, sunk listless into Sebastian's arms. He was immediately carried by the other to a seat, which being fixed close to a table, the poor struggling minstrel immediately threw his arms thereon, and reclining his head between his hands, became for a few moments the victim of insensibility. The astounded Cavalier, in the mean time,

time, continued reading on, whilst every line produced a fever in his mind, almost too hot for sufferance. His soul too, was so stirred by the strong tempest of boiling wrath, which agitated his whole frame, that it felt as though well nigh bursting from its corporeal element. As for Sebastian, he stood a silent spectator of the different scenes of misery that surrounded him; and though his duty (as taught him by custom, on some former unknown occasions) forbade him to interrupt his young Lord, still he felt secretly, and that most poignantly withal, at the sight of such strong and uncommon agonies, that were depicted in the marking countenance of his master.—To be brief, it was some time before the stranger had concluded the perusal of this damnable scroll.—When he had made a finish, however, his

mind

mind, after experiencing all the convulsions of a most dreadful furious storm, abated by degrees into a state of calmness; whilst reflection came floating on the surface of reason, and soon dispelled the tempest that had just been raging with such uncommon fury. Having therefore, deposited the parchment in the chest again, and fastened it with the iron-key; he very deliberately arranged his mantle, and perceiving, as he turned round, that Valentine continued leaning despondently on the table, he tenderly raised his recumbent head, and clasping him affectionately by both his hands, he thus endeavoured to console and blunt the anguish of his too susceptible feelings:

“ Youth (said the gallant stranger): be not thus spirit-broken and dismayed.—

Did

Did you but experience what run so lately through my soul ; horrors inexpressible would almost have irrecoverably sunk you.—Oh ! my friend—my dearest friend—such, indeed, I shall ever call you (even if a former secret inclination had not prompted me to have done that already)—for first leading me into this dreary—and, I would have said—damnable—but now, as it proves, most propitious recess.—In me regard a future brother, a kind protector—so look upon me, for such will you ever find me.”

“But oh ! my Lord—what of that parchment—some horrid mystery remains concealed therein.”

“No more, youth, of that at present ; —the mystery concerns you not.—When it is read, however, again, you shall be the foremost auditor of its contents.—

And here, I declare, in presence of Sebastian, and upon the honour of a baron, that, seven days from hence, you shall be principally made acquainted with the whole.—Till then, I earnestly conjure you not to entreat, nor question me farther on the subject; as such beseeching would wound both my feelings, and lessen the gratitude and friendship I so devoutly bear you. In the mean time, satisfy me so far as to give your free consent unto my future purposes.—The restraint (if such it can be called) that I wish to attach to your person, will be of short durance.—Let not your tender and susceptible nature, therefore, throw a cloud over your mind, to darken and perplex it.—To conclude, my amiable young friend, it is my wish to remove you straight from this recess of infamy and death,

death, and dwell you for a while, where virtue, safety, and tranquillity conjointly abide. Launcelot (my Sebastian's father here) inherits a neat cottage, in a small village, southward of this spot. His wife, moreover, is a discreet, good-natured merry dame. There intend I, then, to reside you for a short day or so; and to convince you, youth, how much I rely on your integrity and honour; and to prove also, how distantly you are concerned in the mystery of that damnable scroll, I have so fortunately discovered in this howling Monk's recess, I will depute you the guardian of the one chest, as much and as truly, as you are in your own right sole protector of the other; or as safely, in short, as I would entrust my own life and fame in your possession."

"My Lord, I thank you for your fair
 opinion

opinion of me, and shall be content to act as you think fit.—But say (added Valentine)—what is to be done with the melancholy remains of father Conrad?”

“Leave that task to me (replied the stranger, with a rising emotion in his voice and looks); his remains, shall quickly have greater honour paid them than they deserve. Believe me, youth (continued he, with a softened accent, fearful that he should wound the minstrel's susceptible nature) I bear no enmity to the dead, though I may look back on their living deeds with horror and detestation.—Oh! my friend, that one chest contains a catalogue of such black enormities, perpetrated by that damned Monk, as would harrow up thy tender soul.—But no more of that, at present;—let it suffice, that he shall be buried in

the mouth of this recess ; an abode too good for his impious remains."

" Oh ! good my Lord (exclaimed the tender-bosomed minstrel) let them be deposited in his coffin, and interred in the convent of the Carthusians, as the Father has requested in his last will—let them, I do most fervently beseech of you, be disposed of as he has expressed in his dying testament. It would be monstrous ingratitude in me, after the wealth he has so liberally consigned over to my possession, for that purpose chiefly, not to see this last ceremony performed."

" Alas ! youth (replied the stranger) what avails it where his body rests ? Whether in this spot, or in the remotest regions of the earth. The worm exists within monastic ground, the same as underneath this mould. Besides all this,

my friend, if the Father's remains were immediately forwarded to the monastery or convent of the Carthusians—it would not only be unprofitable trouble, but expose his memory to increased horror and infamy; for the moment this same confessional scroll gets report among the brethren of his order, his relics will be disembowelled from their mother Earth, and left to moulder in the common stews.”

“ But still, my Lord (thus tenderly urged the minstrel) there is an infinite gratification in conforming to the last wishes of those whom we have either known or conversed with in their dying moments, let their guilt or transgressions be ever so glaringly infamous.—Repentance is reconcileable to the Almighty—then why not with us?—Father Conrad

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appeared

appeared to me a sinner on his own account—but still, my Lord, he seemed a repentant one, also.—I am unconscious of his sins, but still I have been an eye-witness of his repentance, and repentance the most sincere and poignant, withal.—Death surely cancels all worldly animosities;—and—though we condemn the wretched malefactor's crimes, when stretched upon the excruciating wheel, still we cannot refrain from commiserating his agonies, and feeling for his intense sufferings. It is not our province to examine farther than death. The unhappy victim passes on to another tribunal, and which we cannot search into, or arraign. It is there alone, they will be adjudged sufficiently, without the possibility of our carrying farther credence, or balancing the merciful scales held forth

forth by the just ministers of heaven—
 Besides, good my Lord—religion and
 habit also teach us, to view the last cere-
 mony of the dead performed with pro-
 per catholic rites. The ground, here, is
 not consecrated for your present design;
 therefore, delay your purpose till the
 morning—let the Father, if he may not
 be conveyed to the convent of the Car-
 thusians, have some show of Christian bu-
 rial.—No doubt but some church or mo-
 nastery is near at hand, where he may, at
 least, be decently interred, and where a
 priest can be procured to perform the fu-
 neral ceremony.—Gratitude, on my part,
 (concluded Valentine) requests this hum-
 ble boon, and which your honour, your
 apparent gentleness, my Lord, I am well
 assured, will not deny.”

“ Every sentence that you utter, youth,

(replied the noble stranger) endears me to you, more and more.—Your gratitude o'er-tops the measure of your tendernefs and generosity. But was I perfuaded to comply with your request, I could not ; for in an hour or fo, I muft depart hence. For the whole world (fo dearly and fondly do I grow attached towards you) I would not leave you in this gloomy recess of death and guilt—I will firft fee the remains of this incestuous, impious, and moft damnable monk (for damned he moft affuredly is) deposited here; and then convoy you to Launcelot's cottage, where I fhall not only find you feure and happy, but alfo, hereafter adduce you, moft haply, a principal witnefs of this night's marvelous difcovery.—As for Chriftian rites, or the offices of a prieft, his remains deferve them not. Believe me, youth, I
am

am as compassionate, have as much of the milk of human kindness in me—even *as yourself*.—When you but know what now thrills with horror (when I think of it) through my brain, you will find, I acted rightly, nay, leniently withal. An act of ceremonial mercy, that, for your sake only, should not else have taken accomplishment.—For-----

-----if it was agreeable to my own will, and according to the deserts of this execrable monster---this most impious Father, I would have his mildewed---horrid remains hung up on the first neighbouring tree, as fit provision for vagrant carrion."

CHAP. XVI.

But I will keep her ign'rant of her good,
To make her heav'nly comforts, of despair,
When 't is least expected.

SHAKSPEARE.

Far from his friends, they placed him in the horrid
circle of *Brumo*, where often, they said, the ghosts
of the dead howled round the stone of their fear.

OSSIAN.

Beneath is all the fiends, there's hell, there's darkness,
There is the sulphureous pit, burning, scalding, stench,
Consumption.—

SHAKSPEARE.

VALENTINE perceiving after this
that all farther persuasions to gain his
point would be ineffectual, continued si-
lent.—Sebastian was then just ordered to
go forth, to summon as many domestics

in,

in, that could be spared from the horses.

“ There, my good fellows (said the stranger, in a gentle accent, void of all masterly authority, and pointing to the fire) go trim and light your torches, and then I will direct you farther. *My friend*, here (next addressing himself to Valentine, for neither yet had bethought themselves of enquiring each other's name) you can, in the mean time, inform me where the Monk's implements lie concealed, where-with he formed this recess, as reported in your story.”

The Minstrel, on this, accompanied by the stranger and Sebastian, proceeded to the outermost chamber, and there informed his companions, that he believed

they were deposited nigh hand the deceased's pallet.

Sebastian, forthwith, perceived a spade and pick-axe, the principal tools wanting for their present purpose. On this, the stranger re-entered the inner recess, and, taking a torch in his hand, ordered his servants to bring the coffin where the corpse lay stretched. The sable inclosure of death then being laid on the ground, close to the side of the pallet, the body, garment, and all, were rolled off, and crammed in together.—Just, however, as they were on the point of fastening the lid, the stranger recollected the human scull, and cross bones, that they had seen behind one of the hangings.—“Hold (said he, as the humane thought came across him) and, before we fasten up the coffin, let us inter with the corpse,

while

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all

all those miserable emblems of mortal decay, and rotten insignias of despair and guilt that lie scattered about the recess. —Some benighted traveller, or wandering innocent, may, one day or another, stray towards this ingenious shelter, and those trappings of woe, will, no doubt, on these accidental occasions, render it as horribly disagreeable, as it is now conveniently formed for protection and repose. —On this, our Cavalier, attended by Sebastian, brought forth the human relics, together with the sable hangings, that had caused so much offence and anxiety to the minstrel. —These were altogether, though with much difficulty, likewise crammed into the coffin. This uncereemonious task being performed, the stranger addressed himself again to Valentine, and requested him to retire for a

while, into the interior recess, whilst they went through their final purpose.—

The Minstrel, however, overwhelmed with all the anxiety, fear, and horror, that such a shocking scene must inspire in a bosom so timid as his own, and dreading solitude still more than any fresh horrors could afford—requested to continue wherever he should chance to be: “For, in your presence, my Lord (said Valentine) I have nothing, I am sure, farther to apprehend.”—On this, he fastened himself on the Knight’s arm, and clasping it with with an hitherto unusual degree of fervour and affection; accompanied him to the mouth of the recess.

Two of the men, being provided with the pick-axe and spade, began the funeral task. The ground, which was of a clayey nature, and had been hardened (as before

fore observed) by the fires which had been kindled thereon, they found to be very obdurate both against their tools and their strength. The stranger perceiving this, ordered them to penetrate no lower than what would just suffice for the depth and breadth of the coffin, and as shallow a surface as possible to be laid thereon.

Poor Valentine could not be a spectator of this awful ceremony, without experiencing the most painful emotions. His arm trembled beneath that of his present—and, as he fondly hoped—his future protector. The composure and unconcern that the latter had hitherto manifested, on this gloomy occasion, was attributed, by the minstrel—partly, to the mystery of the scroll, and partly to his gallant profession of arms, which had rendered

rendered him familiar to the sight of death; for he was well convinced, it could not be charged to his lack of humanity.

When the slender pit was dug, the Cavalier ordered the corpse to be enclosed, and the head of it to be turned towards the northern point; for this site (said he) will best agree with the tempestuous discord of its howling spirit.

Scarce, however, had these words escaped his lips, when they were alarmed by a violent rustling noise in one of the adjoining chambers.—The men were somewhat startled, and betrayed a kind of unusual apprehension, which could arise only from the dismal office they had been engaged in; for otherwise, and till now, their brave natures had never known the idle qualms of fear.

It

It happened still worse, however, with Valentine, for when he had at first distinguished the rustling sounds within, his knees smote against each other—his teeth chattered—and he would have dropped senseless on the ground, had he not been held up by his dauntless companion.

“Cheerily—cheerily, my boy (gently exclaimed the latter, feeling for the agony Valentine so perceptibly laboured under) What art afraid of?—Why, thou chicken-hearted youth (continued he with a smile) I will have thee pinned up in some nursery, among little children, and wanton hand-maids. There, indeed, thou mayest prove of valiant service, and the damsels willing, improve their hot-beds—with a second stock.”——Then, turning to his two grave-diggers, who had let the coffin fall obliquely on the margin of its burial-

burial place, he gave them both an austere look, and then with his former strain of irony (observed) "What! art thou both panic-struck likewise? Marry, and on my very troth, I shall couple thee with this milk-sop, to truckle with the maids also, and jerk them underneath their downy chins."

The Cavalier, on this, accompanied by Sebastian, with each a torch in their hand, would have proceeded with him alone into the recess; but, Valentine, notwithstanding the severity of his fears, stuck closely on his arm, inwardly defying every dreadful circumstance that might at present or hereafter occur, when under the protection of his guardian wing.

The two men, on the other hand, stung with the reproach of their Lord, and thinking, perhaps, that some ambuscade
had

had been laid by a neighbouring banditti, or some Corsairs of Barbary, that infested most of these southern parts of Italy, might have occasioned this loud and rustling noise (particularly, as what their Captain had uttered in regard to the Monk, gave them no favourable presentiment of the place they were in) they both drew their swords, and immediately followed him into the recess.

The noise still continued, though apparently retreating at every forward step they took. The farther they advanced, so by degrees it subsided, and at last died entirely away.

The Cavalier examined every part of the anterior chamber with the utmost deliberation and circumspection, but could discover nothing——“What (exclaimed he, with a smile, on thus being disappointed)

ed) have we nothing here.—Marry then, whatever you may be, let me caution you to lie still, till we have performed our ceremony, and suffer us quietly to be gone. Or else, beware of trifling!”

They then proceeded to the inner recess, and finding every thing vacant there also, the stranger, with fresh jocularly again observed: “Why, surely, Father Conrad, has not already dispatched his ghost hither, to alarm us all, before his body has been interred! The devil, his old master, will surely torment him a little for the black deeds he instigated him to commit in this world, before he gives his spirit an infernal passport to return among us once again.—Or,——perhaps this mildewed lump of infamy purposes to take the same advantage of the living when dead, as he did of the dead when
living.

living.——Though, on recollection (concluded the stranger, with a sigh, that he endeavoured to suppress, but which, however, came from his very heart) this same pupil of darkness has done enough already here, without attempting to torment us any more.”

Whilst the Cavalier was conversing thus, Valentine attentively observed his countenance, and could perceive a degree of anguish thereon, that did not altogether correspond with the levity of his discourse. He, perhaps, thought (a thought arising from the anxiety he had all along observed in the stranger to allay and soften his own distracted fears) that his peculiar composure, on an occasion which would have alarmed the many, was only generously assumed to quiet the terrors it was but too susceptible that he himself

-had

had so strongly and repeatedly laboured under. One observation, indeed, that he had, both struck and perplexed Valentine to sift the disposition of:—"Perhaps, this mildewed lump of infamy purposes to take the same advantage of the *living when dead*, as he did of the *dead when living*."—What advantage the Father could have taken of the dead when living, the Minstrel could by no means whatever account for? It was some mystery (he concluded) attached to the scroll; and he therefore forbore to rack his invention, with endeavouring to interpret its obscurity, as his curiosity would be fully gratified with a knowledge of the whole in the short space of a day or so.

The stranger's conversation, however, had a more particular effect on his two domestics; for though they feared no be-
ing

ing existing, still they began to be greatly alarmed, when their Lord talked of the Monk's ghost; and when he also could not discover, or account for, the strange noise they had just so distinctly heard.—Whatever were their fears and dread, however, of immaterial beings, they, nevertheless, silently followed their master again to the mouth of the recess—where they concluded their task with visible agitation, and buried the corpse in the shallow hole they had dug for it.

CHAP. XVII.

—How fits expectation in the air.

Dear lad, believe it,

For they shall yet belie thy happier years,

That say thou art a man; Diana's lip

Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe

Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,

And all is semblative a woman's part.

SHAKESPEARE.

SCARCE however, had the two men (stranger still than before!) scattered the earth over the Monk's remains, when they distinguished the noise, with more violence than ever. On this, they momentarily let their pick-axe and spade fall upon the ground. Their fears now doubly

doubly debilitated their powers, for they could scarce fasten their hands on the handles of their swords. The stranger, nevertheless (whose surprize and rage, fortunately for them, now expelled all traces of his former levity) did not observe their apprehensions, but with his wonted courage and fortitude, drew forth his good sword, the moment he heard the internal noise repeated, and holding the torch in his left hand, instantly rushed into the first recess, exclaiming with much vehemence, as he went—"By my soul and my honour, I will not thus be farther tampered with!—Follow me, Sebastian—we will discover the key to this mystery, or perish in the attempt;—my curiosity shall be satisfied at all events."

The undaunted Cavalier thus rushing impetuously forward, he unwittingly left

Valentine

Valentine behind, petrified with horror, and motionless as a statue. As for the two men, they were equally overcome with their own fears, and the apprehensions they entertained for their young Lord; but stood staring at each other, incapable of speaking, and uncertain whether to follow, or remain where they were. Each alike seemed ready to advance, but neither was willing to take the lead. At length they distinguished a faint clashing of swords, which like an electric shock, gave instant re-animation to both, and straight they rushed forward abreast, to assist their master.

Valentine, the moment he heard this same clash, screamed aloud, and then as loudly exclaimed—"Oh! spare the gallant youth—spare the noble——" Nature then yielded to this uncommon exertion

ertion of power, and he staggered against the clayey wall, unable to move or speak farther. His remaining senses, however, were as almost instantly struck with a loud laughter, which seemed to proceed from the innermost chamber ;—this sound denoted the triumph of a conquering party. On this, he drooped almost lifeless on the piece of earth where the Monk had been just interred ; his spirits, nevertheless, were as almost instantly cheered, by hearing the Cavalier, in approaching accents, exclaim—" By Saint Mark, we will sacrifice this fellow, as a victim to our fears !" —Valentine, on hearing this immediately sprung from his prostrate state, and scarce had he tremblingly hurried towards the first entrance —when his poor hawk flew towards him, and perching directly on his fist,

looked up to him in apparent solicitation for shelter and protection.

Our falconer (for falconer or minstrel we may call him, according to the change of circumstances) tenderly moved by the bird's attachment, and now clearly perceiving the innocent object of their pursuit, to have been the harmless cause of all their late fears—he held forth the affectionate and favourite companion of his solitude, and with an accent of fondness, altogether irresistible, exclaimed—
 “Oh! Sir Cavalier, do not destroy my very best of friends, my faithful falcon, and my most active caterer.”

The Knight, struck alike with the confident perch of the hawk, who now seemed to bid him defiance, for under the protection of his master, he was ready, with his pointed beak, fixed talons, and

wide

wide expanded wing, to meet a fair combat, and moved also with the expressive tenderness of Valentine, whose still palid countenance fully explained what he had felt and undergone in their absence; but he clasped him like a tender beloved brother to his generous breast. This endearing token of his future friendship, was repeated thrice—thrice with all that affectionate ardor which accompanies the real existence of that great and noble social passion; and then, looking stedfastly on the falconer, he smilingly and archly observed—“Why, boy, this bosom is as soft and yielding, as that of the ripening virgin.”

Valentine blushed, and held down his head, and in order also to conceal his emotions, he stroked his hawk, who in return would readily have perched for

that night on the tender spot that had been so lately embraced by his rival and persecutor.

After the Cavalier had (as a matter of some compensation) admired and encouraged the poor hawk, whom he had so much alarmed and endangered ; he turned round to his servants, and seeing their swords still unsheathed, and themselves ashamed of their idle fears—he ordered them to be covered, and laying aside his former irony, on such like occasions, he observed—“ Indeed, my good fellows, I have known men brave as yourselves, terrified at the flitting of a bat around their dark nightly tent, as much as we have all been at the fluttering of this poor harmless hawk.—But marry, boy, and thou, my faithful Sebastian, shall be cheerful now, for in searching after the
poor

poor father's supposed spirit, we found something more substantial—plenty of game, friends, and some dozen flasks of wine!”

“And this very bird (replied Valentine, pointing to the hawk, who hung close to his master's fist, and at the same keeping a steady and penetrating eye on the stranger, whose familiar strokings could not entirely divest him of the apprehensions he had so lately experienced)—This very bird, caught this same game.—The poor fellow (continued he with a smile) has not met with much recompence and gratitude, for the supper he is about to provide you with.”

After the stranger had allowed the propriety of this gentle rebuke, he told his men to go out and see whether the horses without were safe, and to relieve

their companions from their watch.
 Launcelot, on this, soon after made his
 first appearance in the recess, and as
 quickly reported, that the animals had
 been all carefully fastened round the body
 of a tree, whose nethern branches seem-
 ed at the first moment to yield them some
 acceptable provender, as they had taken
 to it immediately. Upon which the
 stranger led Valentine into the farther
 chamber, preceded by Launcelot and Se-
 bastian, with torches.
 After having re-illuminated the tripod
 lamp that was suspended from the ceil-
 ing, and which has been extinguished by
 the hawk in his flight—and thrown fresh
 fuel on the fire, they all sat indistinctively
 round the stirring blaze, and with a de-
 gree of cheerfulness that infused such sa-
 tisfaction and pleasure in our Falconer's
 mind,

mind, that he had not experienced for some time before.—The Cavalier observing this, began to laugh over the surprise and alarm that the hawk had occasioned them.—“ But where was the fly rogue concealed (continued he) that we did not discover him on our first search?”

“ In yonder hole, no doubt (replied Valentine in the wall. The vacuity made purposely for him by the deceased Monk, in gratitude for the food he has for this month past afforded us. Therein stands his nocturnal perch, and, alarmed, I suppose, by the disturbed sounds he heard without—the glimmering of the torches, or, perhaps, by my well known voice, he sprung from his shelter, and occasioned the noise by his flight about the chamber that has created so much confusion among us all.—When he distinguished the light, however,

however, approach (as has ever been his custom) he must have taken to his nest again, by which he avoided your first pursuit.—But in return, Sir Cavalier (concluded Valentine) what caused those clashing of swords, that we distinguished without; and which not only almost overcame me in sad apprehension, lest some danger might have surrounded *you*, but which, like lightning, spurred your servants from their inanimate state to fly onward, with the most determined fortitude, to participate in your supposed impending danger?”

“In good faith (replied the Cavalier) it was even thus:—

“When we had searched about both the chambers, and perceived nothing, as before (though the sounds were still strong in our ears) we began to grope about with

our

our swords (for the lamp that lighted us at first, was now, to our fresh surprise, extinguished) and in that act, we aroused the hawk, for he almost immediately afterwards flapped directly betwixt us both, and just struck each of us with the dimensions of his wings; and on raising our weapons to bring him down, we clashed them against each other in the attempt.”—

“ Poor fellow (said Valentine, tenderly stroking his hawk, that still continued perching on his fist) thou hast then narrowly escaped, indeed!—This had been an ungracious return for all thy diligence and labour.—But come (taking up a lark that lay with the wild fowl upon the table) thou shalt once more go quietly to roost, and have this gorge—aye—and if thou likest it, sweet bird, another too, for the
fatigue

fatigue and apprehensions you must have experienced.”—

“Why, I should imagine (said the stranger, with a significant look) that thou hadst been born of one of our first nobles, by the love and knowledge you entertain and possess of falconry.—Though, in good faith, you look more like some Count’s fair daughter than his son.

Valentine, on this, took the opportunity of concealing a certain suffusion that had spread itself over his face, by putting the hawk to roost, and then returned composedly to his seat.

“One thing, my boy (said the Cavalier) have I neglected to ask of you—pry thee, inform me of your name.”—

“Valentine, my Lord!”

“Valentine!—marry—the first name in

love’s

love's calendar.—Now, youth, I pray thee, answer me this again : From whence ? ” —

“ Pardon me, my Lord.—But I beseech thee, first grant me reply for reply.—May I therefore know your name also ; ” —

“ Not now, youth—for certain reasons I would delay this answer. In a few short days, however, you shall know all that you wish to know.—Therefore, I prithee, answer me—from whence ? ” —

“ Once more, pardon me, my dear Lord.—To my name, I have frankly answered—to aught more, I cannot—no—not for life's value. And what to me is in my mind more estimable—the loss of your proffered friendship and protection.”

The entrance of the two servants (who having gained a scent of the game which the recess was provided with, and having

a very violent inclination to be made partakers of the same) terminated a discourse which might have probably untwisted the knot of friendship that had just been cemented betwixt the Minstrel and the stranger.—

“The horses, my Lord (said the foremost) are all secure, and still brousing on the leaves of the tree, as though they had had no provender for a week.”

“If it is even so (said the Cavalier jocosely, for perceiving that his interrogatories were not perfectly consonant to the feelings of Valentine, he wished to give another turn to the subject)—If it is even so, we will have a good feed likewise;—therefore, take these birds, spit them with your swords.—No bad—no dishonourable employ, my boys, to soldiers, who eat where they can, and fight
when

when they can; and quickly roast them before that cheering fire. The command was no sooner given, than obeyed; and the wild fowls were instantly spitted, and very soon afterwards devoured. The Cavalier during this ceremony, seated himself with Valentine and Sebastian at one table, whilst Launcelot and the others did the same round another.—The minstrel, however, declined his share of the repast, for the edge of his appetite had been blunted by the vicissitudes of the day. He, nevertheless, gave a good account to his surrounding friends in another way; for taking up his lute, he sung, accompanied by the most exquisite harmony of his celestial-attuned instrument, the Syracusan war-song, as chaunted in the days of yore.

Our stranger was so enraptured with the excellencies of Valentine, that he

would not have perceived the dawn of day, creeping through the avenues of this unhallowed recess, if Sebastian had not reminded him of—" *Meet me on the first evening in the month of April, at Messina's port.*"

The knight on this, started from his enchantment, and after charging Sebastian with the care of the chests, and Launcelot also with the care of the lute and the hawk, he posted with all speed out of the cave; and after first vaulting with such ease and dignity on his steed;

As if an angel dropt down from the clouds,
To turn and wind a fiery *Pegasus*,
And 'witch the world with noble horfemanship;
and then ordering Sebastian to assist Valentine behind him, he ascended like an arrow up the steep sides of the glen, and soon found himself at the cottage-door of old Launcelot, where Mopfa was
anxiously

anxiously attending him, he having so far outgone his appointed time of reaching there, by the delay occasioned in the Monk's recess.

Such was the rapidity with which the stranger had hurried therefrom, that Valentine had no opportunity left to make the least mournful reflection upon the dismal fate of the wretched Monk, as he trod over his miserable remains.—Tor-
ture superfluous!—For, alas! poor wanderer, thou hadst reflections mournful enough of thine own, without agonizing thy distracted bosom with the miseries and destinies of others; and now—

Sweetest Santa-Maria—fairest rose in all Italia's flowery plains—for awhile—
Farewell.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.